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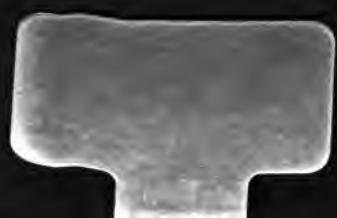
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THE
STATE OF MAN AFTER DEATH.

INTIMATIONS
OF
HOLY SCRIPTURE
AS TO THE
STATE OF MAN AFTER DEATH.

BY THE
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TO
H. B. LINDSAY, ESQ.,
AND
MRS. CHARLES MILNER,
TO WHOM
THEIR DESIGN AND EXECUTION ARE DUE,
THESE PAGES ARE
GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED.

P R E F A C E.

THE following Lectures contain the substance of addresses delivered before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn; but they have been somewhat changed in form, to adapt them to more general use.

The main object of the Author has been to show what Scripture does, and what it does not, reveal to us as to the state of man after death. Before all other replies to negative teaching (it has been truly said), some clearing up of the positive teaching of Scripture is required.

The question, accordingly, here considered is not at all whether certain views as to the condition of men in a future state are to be regarded as true or false on other than Scriptural grounds, or whether certain difficulties felt with regard to them, and objections raised with reference to them (supposing they are distinctly taught in Scripture), are

valid or not. The question here is, What exactly is the teaching of Scripture on these points?

That man *does* exist in some condition after death, is, by the nature of the case, not argued here, but assumed.

Three Lectures are devoted to the question of what is intimated in Scripture as to man's state between death and the resurrection; and three to the consideration of its teaching as to man's condition after the resurrection and the judgment of the great day. Of the remaining Lectures, the first gives the general principles on which the inquiry is conducted, while the last sums up the conclusions arrived at in a general view.

The general *speculative* result to which the considerations here brought forward will be found to lead is, that Holy Scripture does not give us grounds in many cases for absolutely determining either those points which are emphatically denied by many, or those which are as positively affirmed. It maintains, indeed, a remarkable *reserve* with regard to speculative matters, especially with regard to the one treated of here; while it gives clear definite instruction on those points on which it is practically necessary for us to be rightly informed. And hence, those

who are led, on various grounds, to widely different conclusions on the speculative matters referred to, may yet quite agree to differ here; going together so far as Scripture guides them; and only diverging where Scripture either veils futurity altogether, or only throws so much light into the darkness, as may increase our awe and reverence, and show us how little is, perhaps can be, known by us now. At the same time, objections raised against Scripture, as supposed to teach such and such doctrines definitely, fall to the ground.

It might seem unnecessary to observe—did not experience prove the contrary—that it does not follow that where Scripture does not *declare* anything for our knowledge, it does not *suggest* anything to our hope; or that where any truth cannot be positively *proved* from Scripture, the truth may be considered to be denied; still less that some quite opposite view is implied instead.

The general *practical* result to which the inquiries here pursued will be found to lead is, a more vivid perception of the vast importance of our present swiftly passing life, as a preparation for the eternity, whatever it may be, which lies beyond. The discipline and probation to which we are subjected now, the

opportunities which are afforded now, if neglected here, can never be recalled; the blessings now offered, if forfeited, are lost, it would seem, for ever; whatever *other* opportunities may be given, and blessings held out in God's mercy, in the ages of ages of the unknown world beyond the grave.

Thus it is humbly hoped that these Lectures may be a help to some, either removing their difficulties, or brightening their hopes, or presenting to them a wider view of God's merciful dealings with mankind in Christ, and of the phenomena of the spiritual life, or giving them a deeper sense of the momentous issues which depend on their right use of this present life, or strengthening their living faith in Him who is revealed to us as the God "not of the dead, but of the living, for *all* live to Him."

WESTCOTT, *October*, 1879.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.	
GENERAL PRINCIPLES	PAGE I
LECTURE II.	
THE INTERMEDIATE STATE	19
LECTURE III.	
CONDITIONS OF MEN IN IT	35
LECTURE IV.	
OUR LORD'S PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON	52
LECTURE V.	
POSSIBILITIES OF THE FUTURE LIFE	67
LECTURE VI.	
FUTURE STATE OF THE BLESSED.	90
LECTURE VII.	
FUTURE STATE OF THE LOST	105
LECTURE VIII.	
CONCLUDING SUMMARY	127

THE STATE OF MAN AFTER DEATH.

LECTURE I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

“Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.”

ST. JOHN V. 39.

IT was a natural desire, we feel, which prompted St. Peter to put to our Lord his question as to the friend whom he loved: “Lord, what shall this man do?” By a natural instinct of our being, we look onward into the distance, first to the nearer future, and then to that which lies beyond in the unseen world. We try to forecast the coming destiny of ourselves, and of others with whom our lives are interlinked, and around whom our affections are entwined; and then, with a wider range of view, we speculate as to the probable or possible destiny, through the “ages of ages” of which Holy Scripture speaks, of the human race at large, as it spreads out in all its multiform variety of condition, external and internal, from the beginning to the end of time. “There will always be a peculiar fascination,” writes

Principal Tulloch,* “in questions pertaining to the future, especially in so far as they touch the issues of good and evil. The more profoundly this mystery is felt by thoughtful minds, the more in certain moods will they crave to penetrate behind the veil, and to lay hold of something definite, on which to rest their hopes or fears.”

Yet our Lord here—as on a somewhat similar occasion, when the question was propounded to Him: “Lord, are there few that be saved?” (a question, however, which implied a deeper error, probably, as to the nature of salvation itself)—gently rebuked the inquiry which was made by the Apostle, whose impulsive nature had led him to express the thought which many cherish unexpressed. And in this case, as in so many others, our Lord’s words probably are designed to have a meaning extending far beyond the circumstances to which they were immediately addressed. They seem to be a motto for all inquiry into the future, nearer or more remote, all anticipation of our future lot. I think they teach—what all Holy Scripture, I believe we shall find, teaches throughout—that it is on the *now* of this present time, this present life, that our thoughts are to be mainly fixed; that, so far as we do cautiously and without anxiety forecast the future, we are to look to find it, for most wise purposes, hidden by a veil, in great measure,

* *Contemporary Review*, April 1878, p. 156.

declared to us generally as a state of utmost blessedness for those who have truly lived to God on earth, but not definitely disclosed as yet to our view. It has been well said by one prominent writer on this subject of late, the Rev. E. White, that "too vivid conceptions of eternal things are not desirable in the spiritual life of mankind." * Little, comparatively, is shown to us as to the future :

"Act—act in the living Present,"

is the great practical injunction for us all.

Why, then, it may well be asked, should we enter upon the question of man's state after death? Many things combine to force the subject upon our minds, more especially at this time, when we are led to look on from the view given of man as originally created in the first pages of the Bible, with their apocalypse of the past, to the glimpses given of man's future condition at the close of the Bible, in the Revelation of St. John.† Much of physical research suggests it; much of the inquiries which lie on the border-land of Psychology and Metaphysics brings it into view. Still more, the course of recent theological teaching and thought almost necessitates the consideration of the question, within its proper limits, and in its proper spirit, and presses it upon the mind. The enforced publication of one notable

* "Life and Death," p. 23.

† See Lessons for Septuagesima Sunday, when this Lecture was delivered.

series of sermons, bearing the designation of "Eternal Hope," more especially, and the keen interest with which it has been received at home and abroad, proves very conclusively what a hold the subject has gained upon the minds of many even of those who are wrongly supposed to "care for none of these things"; while it has itself stimulated inquiry, and called forth, or brought into more prominent notice, a multitude of treatises on the same subject, of the utmost variety in their mode of treatment, their character, and their worth.

And now prevailing opinion on this dark and difficult matter appears to be in an unsatisfactory state. There are those who cling with a bigoted pertinacity to old traditional beliefs as to the destiny of Creation, closing their eyes resolutely against the admission of any new light, unwilling to listen to the least idea of any change or surrender, however many earnest and thoughtful minds have been shocked by the popular teaching on this subject, almost driven to disbelief in Holy Scripture, at least into alienation from the Church. "It was the doctrine of endless torments," Canon Farrar writes,* "which made an infidel of the elder Mill." And he quotes his own words: "Compared with this, every other objection to Christianity sinks into insignificance." Then there are those who, by a

* Pref., p. xlix.

natural reaction, fly off into an opposite extreme; and, in their rejection of the old position, take up a new, or at least a revived, view of the future, equally positive and dogmatic, equally, if it be so, unscriptural and unsound. While a large body, distracted by various interpretations of Holy Scripture, oppositions of science without, conflicts of opinion within, are in a state of perplexity and suspense, and, like St. Paul and his shipmates, (it has been said,) with anchors out and breakers ahead, "wish for the day." *

I have thought, then, that I could not do better, writing for those whom I am called upon to address here, than by trying to guide you, so far as I can, in the consideration of what is, and equally of what is not, made known to us as to the condition of man after death. In this, and in other matters, the silence of Holy Scripture, as well as its direct utterance, is to be duly weighed.

It is of course to the disclosures regarding it given in Holy Scripture that information on this point is to be looked for by us who accept the Scriptures as God's Revelation to mankind, of which Christ's ministers are to be the mouthpiece, first inquiring for themselves, "What saith the Scripture?" and then setting before others what it does and what it does not seem to them to declare.

* Heard, "Tripartite Nature of Man," p. 209.

But we are warranted in seeking for aid in searching out what is the teaching of Holy Scripture on any point, from the teachings of God's Book of outward nature, and the structure of our own physical and psychical and pneumatical being, as well as from those moral convictions which we believe to have been imparted to us by God, and whose true harmony with the teaching of Scripture it is most important to consider, in order to meet the special requirements of present religious thought.

In preparing to bring the subject before you, I have tried to weigh carefully the more important disquisitions on it which have been issued of late, and to sift out the valuable truths which are often embedded in much that is fragmentary and disjointed, much that might mislead by being one-sided and exaggerated, through the omission of counterbalancing statements, much that is rhetorically expressed.

In entering on such an inquiry, let it be our earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit may go with us, guiding us gently on our way,* according to the Saviour's promise, leading us on, as we yield ourselves to His direction, to a clearer and fuller view of the truth, and maintaining in us a spirit fair and candid, patient, diligent, as we try to enter into the teaching of God. May He keep before our minds the thought of the

* *ὁδηγήσει* : St. John xvi. 13.

cloud which overhung the mercy seat, as reminding us of the "holy obscurity" in which the Divine mysteries are immersed; of the caution, the humility, the reverence, with which we should endeavour to discover what God would, and what God would not, reveal to our view.

There are some leading principles to be kept in mind in making the inquiry, which I will point out to you to-day as briefly and simply as I can; reserving for another occasion the prosecution of the inquiry itself.

And first, I think it is important to fix in our thoughts the principle that *Holy Scripture is mainly*—I do not of course say entirely, but mainly—*concerned with this present life*. The point of view of its teaching, I am convinced, (as was said before) is to show man what he should be and do in this passing world. "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation," for those who have the offer made to them of that salvation in Christ, *as it is made to us*, is the sentence which gathers up into a head the practical lesson for our guidance, in this aspect of it, which the Bible would convey to our minds. We very much (if I mistake not), ministers and people alike, reverse the view. If any one took mere popular teaching as his guide, he might (I think it may be fairly said) suppose that the Bible was mainly concerned with the future life, and with this life only

as leading up to it. He would be surprised to find Holy Scripture primarily occupied with this present world, and with the future only as that condition with which our life here is indissolubly interlinked. We think of eternal life in Christ as a *future* reality; we dwell on the *future* happiness and peace of the saints of God; we think of salvation in Christ through the Holy Spirit as an escape from God's wrath, a deliverance from the penalty of sin *hereafter*, not as a restoration *now* to the favour of a loving Father and God, who would have all men to be saved and come to the living knowledge of the truth now, and who has sent His Son to seek and to save, with a present, and not merely a future salvation, that which was lost. We require to be brought to view it more truly as a deliverance from the guilt and power of sin *in this life*, an imparted capability in ever-increasing fulness to become God's true children; to recover His Image lost or impaired; to live a free, noble, heavenly life; to do God's work, and fulfil His will, after the example of our Divine Master, and give life its true dignity and meaning *now*, "in this present evil world"—*i.e.* (as the Apostle's words seem to mean), amid the pressing cares, trials, sorrows, perplexities, of this present fleeting and disordered world.* True, this life is an eternal, a spiritual life. True, the stream which takes its rise on earth is to flow on for

* *Εν τῷ ἀνεστῶτι αἰῶνι ποιεῖν*; Gal. i. 4.

ever in the unseen world. The inner germ is to live on and flourish and bear fruit ages after the outer husk, which once enfolded it, has passed away. The precious jewel abides in its splendour when the casket has perished in which it was once encased. If here we are to labour and struggle, there is laid up in store for us a great reward. But our future life is to take its rise here. Nay, more: on the character of our life and spirit here, on the degree of excellence attained by God's grace, our condition through eternity is to depend. This is the all-important point for us. Here our eternal life is to be begun in Christ. And he that hath the Son "*hath* life," is Christ's express declaration, "and shall not come into condemnation, but *is passed* out of death into life."

Let it be observed that even to have brought before our thoughts thus generally the subject of our state after death will not have been without its value for us, if it does no more than force upon us more emphatically this great truth, that the present, not the future, is to be mainly in our view, or the future as essentially interlinked with, and dependent on, our present life; that *now*, as the passing years and days and hours of life bring opportunities for resistance to evil, for self-denying exertion, for a life reared on prayer and meditation upon God—now we are to be "possessing our souls"

in patience, amid the trials and distractions of daily life, now we are to be living to God continually, forming a heavenly character, growing in grace; that while in the Old Testament slight glimpses only are given of a future world, even under the New Dispensation of Christ and the Spirit very little comparatively is said by our Lord Himself, or His inspired Apostles, as to our future state of being, and that mainly when it was called forth by the circumstances of the time; whereas He and they inculcate so fully and constantly by their life and teaching what should be the conduct, still more the tone and spirit, of man's life here. So much does everything conspire to press upon us the momentous value in God's sight of each throb and pulse of our higher being now, in this present life, this beginning of the life which is to last on for ever.

Then a second principle to be kept in view in considering this question is, that, *So far as Holy Scripture DOES speak of the future life, it speaks more emphatically of the state of the blessed than of that of the lost.* And this is just in accordance with the whole spirit of the Book of God. The Bible (as we are reminded at this season of the weeks preparatory to Lent) *first* shows us what man was according to God's design as created in innocence; and *then* it goes on to exhibit man's unhappy fall. So the Holy Scriptures are a revelation throughout, in various

measures and in various modes, of God's *remedial* plan of love for the restoration of man to the happiness which he had forfeited, the condition which he had lost; and only in a secondary way of God's *retributive* dispensations, as the shadow which only brings out more markedly the brightness of the light for a time intercepted and then restored. Whereas, popular religious thought very much re-writes the Bible (as it were) for itself, and dwells mainly on man's sin and penal misery in his alienation from God, of which Holy Scripture is forced (so to say) to speak so often, only because evil unhappily prevails so much more widely than good in the world. We do not refer so much as we should to man's high true being and destiny, and the glorious possibilities of his regenerate and renewed life. And so it is with regard to the future too. God is not a stern taskmaster, who would force his unwilling slaves into constrained obedience, by stern denunciations of misdoing and terrible visions of impending doom. He is a loving Father, who would have His children attain to their true being, and to the bliss which appertains to it, by becoming like Him now, fit to be with Him for ever, as the glorious reward of their having, "in this their day," accepted His offers in Christ, yielded to the motions of His good Spirit, and surrendered themselves to Him. If He shows them His grief and displeasure at sin, how abhorrent it is to His

nature, what consequences it essentially entails, this is but to warn them mercifully of their great danger, and show them evil in its true guilt, and save them from drawing near to the edge of the precipice, to their ruin, and His own (as He deigns to regard it) grievous loss. When He *does* more emphatically point out the terrible penalties of wilful sin, it is where the danger is the greatest, because of the higher blessings rejected, the fuller grace and offers of love refused. And so it has been truly said that "by far the most express declarations on the subject of future punishment are found, not in the Law, but in the Gospel, and proceeded from the lips of Incarnate Love."* "The measure of holiness is antagonism to sin."†

We are to look, therefore, more for anticipations of the glory and happiness of those who *are* saved in Christ, less for any full disclosure of the state of those who are *not*.

There is still one third and last principle which it is necessary to keep in view throughout, which is this: that, so far as the Holy Scriptures *do* refer to the state of the lost, it is *the state mainly of those who have had opportunities of knowing God*. This is a principle so obvious, that it is strange to find it constantly lost sight of in interpreting both Holy

* Rev. C. F. Childe, "Unsafe Anchor," p. 92.

† Rev. H. Allon, in *Contemporary Review*.

Scripture itself, and passages which are adopted from it into the formularies of the Church. The Bible, in fact, is silent in a remarkable degree as to those who "are without," the Gentiles who "have not the Law," the hopelessly ignorant, the mentally imbecile, and the like, who have never had any "day of visitation," with its great privileges, though its terrible responsibilities, such as is granted in a general, and (commonly) in a more special, personal way, to those who can receive it in Christian lands. Only, we are expressly told that it shall be "more tolerable" in the day of judgment for heathen cities, than for those who might have known, but have rejected, God as revealed to mankind in Christ. It assumes, by the very nature of the case, that those who hear or read its words may, in doing so, know Him and His will. And its condemnations, therefore, of guilt, its revelations of future punishment, must be regarded as applicable, in their full extent, only to those who have wilfully, that is, knowingly and persistently, rejected God; not to those who, by reason of their tender age, their natural infirmity, or the circumstances of their lot, have had few, if any, opportunities of knowing God in this present world. I say, "in their full extent," for, however, few comparatively are without *some* light. And they who go against such light as they have, must be judged, we conclude, by the Unchangeable God on

the same principles for resisting and disobeying such light as they possessed, all being dealt with in perfect equity, according to their opportunities, by an All-righteous Judge. While those who knew their Master's will and did it not are to be punished with "many stripes," those also are to receive chastisement, though with "few stripes," who, so acting, knew it not—*i.e.* (as we understand the words), with the fulness and clearness of knowledge which the others possessed.

Bearing now these three principles in mind throughout our inquiry, we shall have, I think, a clearer view of the mode in which Scriptural statements on this subject are to be interpreted, and as to what we may, and what we may not, expect to find revealed. We shall be prepared to discover how little, rather than how much, is found to be shown to us with respect to the future, when the various passages bearing on it are fairly weighed; and thus much of the hasty dogmatism into which human opinion is in danger of running will be checked. We shall look to have intimations mainly given us of the future blessed state, the "crown of glory," of those who have faithfully accepted Christ, and striven with all their heart to live to God in Him in this present world. So far as the future condition of others is disclosed, it will mainly be the state—made known to us in merciful warning as to the great

heinousness and danger of evil-doing—of those who have all along resisted the motions of God's good Spirit, chosen darkness instead of the light poured upon them by the Sun of Righteousness, the "Day-spring from on high," from God. And thus, every way, we shall feel more and more the importance of this present life on earth, and be led, now while time is ours, now while it is called "to-day," to live in Christ, as the one perfect Example of what our life on earth should be, our one Source of pardon and grace; and so, by the aid of the Holy Spirit from Him, to avoid the evil and to choose the good.

One point still remains to be touched upon here. The thought may arise in some minds that, where the Bible has been so long in the hands of men, all that can be found there on this subject must be already perfectly well ascertained; that there is no room for progressive investigation here; that it is only God's other Book of Nature which presents a field for continuous research. But in truth this is not the case. Did not our Divine Lord Himself bid His hearers to "search the Scriptures"—those Old Testament Scriptures which the Jews had in their hands, and in the knowledge of which they professed to be pre-eminently versed—as if He would direct them to seek out there, and at length discover indeed, that truth which at present they only

fancied they possessed? * How little had they learnt the mystery "hid from ages and generations," hidden and yet revealed in the pages which they thought they knew so well! "When have God's people as a body," it has been truly said by a leading writer on this very subject, "ever seen or received truth beyond their dispensation?" † "Nor is it at all incredible," as Bishop Butler remarks, "that a Book which has been so long in the possession of mankind should contain many truths as yet undiscovered." ‡ It seems to be a law of God's dealings with us, that it is *as men are able to bear it* that He makes His truth to be known. It may be that the fuller view of the efficacy of Christ's redemptive work was not to be opened out till the fulness of the time for its disclosure had arrived; as the knowledge of many remedies for physical maladies has been (it may be) withheld, till there should be less danger of their being abused. Moreover, even in the case of our earthly senses, we know that the first impressions of sense are by no means correct. And the same may well be the case with regard to the first impressions which we receive from the Word of God. Deeper and more patient study, more careful comparison of part with part, may

* "*Δοκείτε ἔχειν, Videmini habere*; Antitheton: *ἵνα ἔχητε, ut revera habeatis*, v. 40."—Bengel.

† Jukes, "Restitution of all Things," p. 98.

‡ "Analogy," Part ii., ch. 3.

show us much to modify in what we had at first accepted as indisputable truth. And further, much which is in a certain sense known and believed is held only in a vague way, which deprives the truth so accepted of its full force. For the power of a truth is proportioned very much to the clearness with which it is entertained.

Accordingly, earnest investigation may give stability and power to our religious beliefs. It may give them *stability*, as showing us more clearly and fully the grounds on which they rest, when they were perhaps received very much upon the authority of others before. And it may increase their *power*, not only as leading us to see more their practical bearings, but also as deepening the impression they make upon the spirit, strengthening their hold upon the whole tenor of our life.*

But there is more even than this. We cannot tell what "open secrets" we may still discover there, told us by Him who, in His Word, as in His works, "whispers His secrets," and does not proclaim them with a loud voice.† We know not what fuller insight we may gain into our relations to God, what light may be thrown upon parts of His Word which seemed dark before, as we pursue our inquiry as to what is revealed to us on any

* See this admirably stated by Paley, in the closing chapter of his "Natural Theology."

† Professor Owen, quoted by H. Dunn.

important subject there. So only, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we carry on our research in a fair, earnest spirit, seeking for Divine wisdom as "for silver," and searching for it as "for hid treasures";* the treasures of the riches of the knowledge of God's ways, "past man's finding out" to the full,† wherewith mankind is dowered anew by God unto Life eternal in Jesus Christ our Lord.

* Prov. ii. 4.

† Ἀνεξίτητοι, Rom. xi. 33.

LECTURE II.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."—ECCLES. xii. 7.

THESE words carry on the mind in thought to the world beyond the grave. The solemn moment has arrived. The end of life on this present earth has come. The last parting thought, aspiration, prayer, has been breathed up and registered in heaven. And the book of life is closed. The body, with all its wondrous mechanism, ministering to the functions of the soul and spirit, and forming a connecting link with the outward world, lies lifeless. The "silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl is broken," in the beautiful imagery which would be so familiar to natives of the East. And we lay the body, which can no longer fulfil its appointed duty, reverently in the grave. And we think—we can hardly fail at times to think—whither now has the spirit winged its way?

Can it be that the spirit rests (as some would

teach) in a state of unconsciousness, as in a trance, through a dark period of "inter-vital gloom," lying between death and the great resurrection of the dead at the last day; so that the moment of death, and that of resurrection, are practically coincident to it? *

Or are there glimpses—it will be remembered that, according to the principles laid down in the last Lecture, we are not to look for more—that the spirit lives on, in a condition incomplete indeed, but that still

" That which lived
Lives on," †

in a state of consciousness, with its psychical and pneumatical powers, through the intermediate period, in a separate, disembodied state, either (as will appear hereafter) in blissful expectation on the one hand, or, on the other, of fearful anticipation of judgment to come, according as its life on earth in the body may have been? Is it so, as a thoughtful layman writes, that "the teaching of Scripture certainly is, that the soul of man, at death, passes into what we usually term '*the separate state*'; that *there* all begin to reap that which they have sown on earth: the righteous, peace and rest, the foretaste of better things to come; the wicked, pain and sorrow, 'the fruit of their own devices' " ? ‡

* See Erskine of Linlathen's Letters, i., p. 84.

† Tennyson, on Princess Alice's Death.

‡ Dunn's "Destiny of the Human Race," p. 65.

And here it must be observed, at the entrance upon the inquiry, that psychology comes in to aid us in searching out what Holy Scripture intimates on this point. For it shows man as consisting of three interdependent, but still more or less distinct elements, body, soul, and spirit, rising one above another in an ascending scale. And it contends that two of these are sufficient for a state of sentient existence; that the spirit and the soul without the body, or the soul and the body without the spirit, can quite be conceived (so far as its researches go) as continuing in a state of consciousness, though not in that condition of complete being which is attained through the living union of the three.

It would occupy far too long a time, if I were to attempt to give even a general view of the course of opinion on this subject of the intermediate state, through Jewish, and early Christian, and more modern times. It must be enough here to remark how constantly, as by an overmastering conviction, persons speak of friends whom they have lost as having passed, they trust, into a better place, however little they may formally entertain any fixed belief as to the spirit's pre-resurrection life; how firmly our great masters of Anglican theology, (such as Bishop Pearson, Bishop Horsley, Bishop Bull,) maintain the doctrine of the continued life of the spirit in the intermediate state, while their teaching is echoed by

a chorus of consenting voices from those many able writers, of various schools of thought, by whom the question of man's state after death has of late been discussed.

It is, however, important to observe with what clear unfaltering accents our own Church speaks upon this point, uniformly cautious and moderate as she is. True, she has, perhaps very wisely, surrendered the Article which she once proposed, in which the Doctrine of the Intermediate State was made a point of belief; whereas the matter had not been laid down in Holy Scripture so positively and indisputably as that it should be enforced on any as an Article of the Christian's Creed, however much warrant there may be for holding it as an *opinion*, full of consolation and hope. And further, errors had, at the time of the Reformation, become so almost inseparably associated with the doctrine, that it was difficult to avoid suggesting those errors incidentally, while trying to inculcate the underlying truth. But yet, in her Burial Service, when she is speaking not so much in a dogmatic as in a hopeful and consolatory tone, she does echo the spirit, if not the very language, of Holy Scripture solemnly and repeatedly, for the great comfort of the mourners as they stand around the grave, soon to close over the last remains of those whom they loved on earth. Her earnest prayer, worded with the repetition common

to our formularies when they would lay emphasis on a truth, goes up to the "Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord," and "with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity." And then she goes on to pray,—thus more distinctly marking her precise view of the state of the soul after death,—that God will "hasten His kingdom, that we, with all those who are departed in the true faith of His Holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul; in His eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" language which has its counterpart in the words of the great "Confession" of Lord Bacon: "I believe that the souls of such as die in the Lord are blessed, and rest from their labours, and enjoy the sight of God; yet so, that they are in expectation of a further revelation of their glory in the last day."

Now, in considering this subject as it is presented in Holy Scripture, we must observe that, however independent the two points may be in themselves, it is hardly possible for us to dissociate the question of our Lord's passage in the spirit into the intermediate realm—or His "descent into hell," as it is commonly expressed—from that of our own existence in an intermediate state. And we must, therefore,

briefly touch first on what is shown to us as to our Lord in regard to the period intervening between the moment of His expiring upon the Cross and His resurrection from the grave.

And here we do best, I think, to put aside at first some passages such as these: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?" which admit *in themselves* of a different meaning from that which would make them refer to the passage of our Lord in the spirit into the unseen world, and the interpretation of which must rather be ruled by other places of Holy Scripture. They may be taken (some of them, at least) to *confirm* a doctrine otherwise established; they can hardly be employed to establish it themselves.

But the one passage which seems to me the most cogent, if not absolutely conclusive, on this subject—notwithstanding all which has been urged to the contrary by one of the most clear-sighted and logical, though one-sided, writers of our Church of late*—is the declaration of our blessed Saviour to the penitent thief upon the cross—"This day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" though, strangely enough, this is the passage upon which the least stress is commonly laid in the theological verification of the Article "He descended into Hell" of the

* Archbishop Whately, "Scripture Revelations of a Future State."

Apostles' Creed. But, seeing that our Lord spoke of no state of existence in the distant future, but said, "*This day* thou shalt be with me in paradise;" seeing, too, as Lightfoot, one of the most learned in Jewish antiquities, has shown in his "*Horæ Hebraicæ*," that "paradise" was one of the terms employed in the Jewish schools to express the state of being after death in which the soul existed previously to the final resurrection, apart from the body, yet in a state of consciousness, either of happiness or of misery,* it is inconceivable that our Lord should have used the expression, knowing the idea which it would convey to him to whom His words were addressed, and knowing, too, how He would be giving a sanction to the opinion of the Jews which was embodied in the term, unless He would have us understand that He did indeed pass in His spirit into that intermediate state when all was finished, and He cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," at the moment of His death upon the Cross.† And therefore we also understand those words spoken by anticipative prescience long before, and applied by St. Peter to our Lord, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," as signifying (to use Bishop Pearson's words), "Thou shalt not suffer

* See Bishop Harold Browne on the Articles, vol. i., p. 107.

† This is exhibited in curiously vivid detail in the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus. See "*Apocryphal Gospels*," by B. H. Cowper, pp. 305, 308, 354, 359.

that soul of mine which shall be forced from my body by the violence of pain upon the cross, but resigned into Thy hands, when it shall go into that place below where the souls of men are detained,—I say, Thou wilt not suffer that soul to continue there as theirs have done ; but shalt bring it shortly from thence, and re-unite it to my body.”

What may have been the *particular part* of the unseen realm which was visited by the spirit of Christ, and what further purposes of love may have been in His view in passing into that realm ; what further results His visit to it may have achieved, and what intimations are thus suggested as to the condition of the spirits of men in the separate state, are questions which must be left for another time.

For the present, it will be enough to regard it as a fulfilment of all the conditions of the Perfect Humanity which He deigned to assume ; our great Forerunner going Himself into that abode into which—if it be so—the spirits of all are to pass, while their bodies sleep in the grave.

Thus we are led on to the further question, as to what intimations are afforded in Holy Scripture with regard to our own passage in the disembodied spirit into the separate and intermediate state.

And here again, while many passages may be adduced as bearing upon the point, there are two

special places which, when taken in combination with the one just quoted, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise," seem equally to be ruling passages, and to establish decisively the Apostolical view of the condition into which man passes immediately upon death.

The two passages are so closely connected, and so clearly express the same idea, that they may almost be regarded as one. And it will be seen that St. Paul carries out in them, in its bearing on man's own future, what had been declared respecting the One Perfect Son of Man.

Writing to the Church at Philippi, he says: "To me to live is Christ,"—His service being the one thing which gives its value to, the one aim of, my life on earth,—“and to die is gain. But if my lot be to continue living in the flesh”—(so I think the words are to be translated)—“this will yield me good fruit from my work. And so, which I shall choose I know not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart *and be with Christ*, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”*

And again, writing to the Church at Corinth, he says: "Therefore"—because we have the earnest of the Spirit—"we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are

* Phil. i. 21, 22.

absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith and not by sight); we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.”*

Now, with regard to this last passage, taken with its context, it has been forcibly remarked that “St. Paul puts the contrast between being absent from the body and present with the Lord in a light which will bear no other interpretation than this: that though he did not desire to be unclothed, *i.e.*, to enter upon the disembodied state, and would rather be of those who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord, that so mortality might be swallowed up of life, yet that he would accept the disembodied state as the less of two evils, or rather as the greater of two gains; and would desire not to be at home in the body, seeing that thus (while at home in the body) he would be absent from the Lord. If the choice lay between body and soul living without the Lord, or soul and spirit with the Lord, he would willingly choose the latter, and consent to be an exile from his home in the flesh,† so that in the spirit he might enjoy the full communion of his exalted Head. Why should he be willing rather to be absent from the body, and to accept such a privation as that, unless that there was a presence

* 2 Cor. v. 6—9.

† Ἐκδημῆσαι.

which more than compensated for the loss of sense perception and bodily consciousness? If the state of death were a state of entire unconsciousness, the Apostle could never have chosen it as the better of two alternatives. In a lower degree he already enjoyed his Lord's presence; and unless he were to pass into a state in which he would enjoy it in a much more perfect way, he could never have thought death the less of two evils. If to him to live was Christ, to die was gain. But where would be the gain, if he lost one kind of consciousness, and did not presently enter into a higher? "*"

And if St. Paul (it may be added), who lived in special nearness to his Lord on earth, and in whom, if in any one, Christ's parting promise, "Lo, I am with you always," was fulfilled,—if *he* could speak of life on earth as a state of comparative absence from Christ, how close and intimate must be that communion with his Lord to which he looked forward in the unseen world!

There is one other passage which must necessarily be adduced as bearing clearly on this point—viz., the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, which unquestionably refers to the state of man between death and the resurrection; for the brethren of the rich man are represented as still living upon earth. And the only possible way to evade the conclusion

* Heard, p. 248.

that it exhibits the spirits of men existing in a state of consciousness after death, is by regarding the whole as a mere imaginative scene, having no counterpart whatever in the reality of things. I am not concerned now with the particular application to be made of the parable, or with the mode in which the scene is to be supposed to have occurred. All I would contend for is, that, however we may admit that much of the *detail* may be figurative—as the great gulph fixed, the cooling of the tongue tormented in the flame, and the like—it involves a total confusion of thought to identify these details with the *general idea* which the Parable conveys. And it seems to me worse than irreverence towards our All-wise Instructor, to suppose that He, knowing full well the opinions prevalent as to the intermediate state among the Jews of His time, and knowing what idea the term “Abraham’s bosom” would convey to them, should yet have delivered to them a Parable which would most indisputably tend to confirm them in their error, if indeed the spirit of man did not pass at death into some separate intermediate state.

Therefore, putting together what has been mercifully revealed to us as to our Divine Redeemer’s passage in the spirit into Paradise at the moment of His death, taking with Him thither the spirit of the penitent thief, and also what has been declared

to us by the inspired Apostle St. Paul as to his clear view of the state of the spirit after deat, has a state in which it was "with Christ," which is "far better" than any condition on earth can be, however high the state to which any by God's grace may have attained—these being the words (let it be remembered) not only of St. Paul, the inspired Apostle, but also of one who had been,—whether "in the body," or whether "out of the body,"* in a temporary separation of the spirit from the body, he could not tell,—caught up into paradise, and had "heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for man to utter"—we have, I think you will feel with me, sure ground on which to stand.

We feel that our Church has good warrant from Holy Scripture—while not forcing the point on the conscience of any as a matter of belief—in speaking her words of comfort to the mourners round the grave, and directing them to cherish the opinion, the hope, that the spirits of the righteous, when they have departed hence, are in the hand of the Lord, in joy and felicity, with Christ, enjoying in some way more fully the light of His nearer Presence, glowing more deeply with the warmth of His Love.

* 2 Cor. xii. 3, 4. The very expression (it will be observed) implies the possibility of conscious existence apart from the body, according to St. Paul.

We dread to think, on the one hand, of the state of those who have lived without God in the world, when they are removed from earthly scenes, severed from bodily senses, which served to engross and divert them while on earth, and which first dulled and then deadened their spiritual being, and who now wake up to see the past in its true light, their opportunities lost, their powers wasted; who realise how their life has been one of selfish forgetfulness of God, if not of open rebellion against Him; and who now grieve with a double sorrow, both on account of their own state, and on account of the state of those whom they have left behind on earth.

But we turn rather to meditate on that state of which more is shown to us—namely, the blessed condition of those who have lived and passed away in the holy faith and the fear of God.

And oh! what abundant consolation there is here, in this thought, for all who sorrow for those whom they have parted with; what hope for all who are Christ's indeed, in the prospect of their own (if it be so) approaching end! Who can tell what may be passing even now in that realm into which St. Paul (as was said before) was carried in the spirit, but the glories of which, as he witnessed them, he was not permitted, or was not able, to disclose; and which "remaineth unrevealed," though one, Lazarus, was

called back from that state by the voice of Christ,
for

“ Something sealed
The lips of that Evangelist.”

We think, What may be the state there of those whom God has seen fit to withdraw from us in their sweet innocence, the early promise of their lives? What of those holy souls whom He has taken away all too soon, as to us in our short sightedness it might appear, but as to whom we trust that they are with Him, as we recall their Christian life on earth, and remember how, as their outward life ebbed away, they grew continually in deeper faith, more ardent love, more tender sympathy, more vivid hope, more entire resignation to God's will?

How great, we conceive, may be the rapture of holy spirits, as now, in that land of rest, no longer trammelled by the hindrances which the fleshly body here on earth places in their way, they can put forth the powers of their psychical being, longing in deepest sympathy for the well-being of those dear to them who are still exposed to earth's trials, and waiting to welcome them to their own abodes of rest and bliss; gazing with deeper, more uninterrupted gaze upon their Lord; filled, too, it may be, with deepest love of one another in their love of Him, as bound into closest union through their union with Christ; waiting in hope for the perfect consummation

of their joy and glory at the coming of the great day!

Walking in reverent caution, but with the sure Word of God in our hands, more than this we dare not, less than this we cannot say. And we "speak to each other softly of our hope" in Christ, for all those who have fallen asleep in Him.

LECTURE III.

CONDITIONS OF MEN IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

“ And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them.”

REV. xiv. 13.

IN resuming the subject with which we have been concerned of late, after an interval, it is necessary to say a few words as to the point which we have, so far, reached, and to recapitulate the arguments which have been adduced.

We saw, then, that we have a certain warrant in Holy Scripture, from the words of our Lord to the penitent thief upon the Cross, and from the expressions used by St. Paul, for thinking that the spirit of man exists in a state of consciousness, when separated from the body, during the interval between death and the resurrection. And we saw that our Church echoes most distinctly this point, when conveying to the mourners in the Burial Service the expression of her consolation and hope ; although she has withdrawn the Article once proposed with

reference to this subject, as not wishing to enforce her view on the conscience of any as a matter of necessary belief.

Strictly speaking, we have only been engaged, so far, with the simple question as to whether Holy Scripture does, or does not, teach that the spirit continues to exist in consciousness after death, in a separate, disembodied state.

But it was impossible to avoid anticipating in some measure the further question, which comes before us more expressly to-day, as to what is disclosed to us with regard to the *condition* of the spirit in the intermediate state.

We saw that the spirits of the righteous may reasonably be supposed to have passed into their Sabbath of needful rest, without which man's busy week-day of his life of discipline and probation would be sadly incomplete. They have gained a glorious compensation for their long period of distraction, arising from earthly cares and duties and relations, which it requires a strong effort of the will to spiritualize, so as to fulfil the spirit of the Apostolic injunction that "Whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do," we should "do all to the glory of God." They rest now from their labours and their trials. Their life is inward now, whereas it was to a great extent outward before,*—a life, as it is expressed by Isaac

* From Heard, p. 278.

Taylor, of "an intense consciousness of its own moral condition." They are withdrawn from the dangers springing from what Scripture speaks of as "the flesh" within, our own nature so far as it is not renewed by the Holy Spirit of God;—from the attraction of "the world" without, with its fleeting and delusive pomp;—and from the spiritual influences of the Evil One, who is represented to us "as going about continually," with his secret malignant influence, "seeking whom he may devour." And to be thus conditioned is, in itself, we feel, to be in a state of greater fitness to receive Divine communications, which it is implied, perhaps, will be vouchsafed, when it is declared that the spirit is "with Christ," in greater nearness to its Lord, brought more within the range of the light and the warmth which flow forth to the spirit from its Spiritual Sun.

Equally intensified too, we cannot but suppose, must be the misery of those who have lived in persistent rebellion against the known will of God, when they have passed from the scene of earthly pleasures, interests, cares, and are severed from bodily powers and senses,—all which things served to divert the mind for a time, and hid the great realities of the spiritual realm from their view. And now the spirit is set free to see itself in its true state, more or less, as it is in the sight of an All-Holy God.

We are not to expect—according to the principles of the inquiry which I ventured to lay down at the first—any very distinct disclosure in Holy Scripture of the condition of the spirits of men in the intermediate state. Our Lord, it will be noticed, does not refer to it directly in His teaching at all. He only speaks of “Paradise” to the penitent thief, meeting, no doubt, mercifully his wants and his capabilities, and supplying him with the needful support which the word would convey to his mind. And St. Paul, who was caught up to the “third Heaven,” to enjoy (as the expression may, perhaps, mean) a vision of God, and taken into “Paradise,” to witness, it may be, the bliss of the spirits in their rest together there,—this being, probably, granted him, to encourage him amid the difficulties and disappointments of his work on earth,—expressly declares that it was not allowed to man, perhaps that it was not in the power of man, to show what was thus revealed to his spiritual view.* Our Lord, we may well suppose, would not speak much, —would not have His Apostles speak much,—of the spirit world, as knowing the sensuous thoughts attaching to the idea of it in the minds of Jews and heathens alike at that time. It is on the duties of life here—on faith, and purity, and holiness, and love, now in this present time (as was said before),

* ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι. 2 Cor. xii. 4.

that He would mainly fix our thoughts; not on the bliss to be enjoyed, on the misery to be endured, in the world unseen. And the reward which He holds out to faithful obedience in love is a spiritual one: to be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven and of God; to know God and be known of Him; to see Him now by faith; to look forward in hope to being with Christ, "which is far better," when withdrawn from life upon the earth.

Still, we are not left without glimpses of the state of man in the world beyond. And distinct terms are employed to express the different conditions of different classes, as they exist in the intermediate state, according to the merits or demerits of their past career, either enjoying great, though still partial and incomplete happiness, not yet "made perfect," but waiting for their "perfect consummation and bliss, both of body and soul," at the great resurrection, and the glorious appearing of their Lord; or else suffering misery, though not yet (we imagine) such as is one day to be theirs, fearfully looking for the "fiery indignation" (as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it),* to be manifested at the judgment of the great day. And thus of each one it may be said, as it is written of Judas, when he passes away from this world, that he goes to "*his own*" appointed "place."†

* Heb. x. 27.

† Acts i. 25.

For, first, there is the expression constantly occurring of "Hades," "Sheol," or "Hell," used sometimes apparently to designate simply the grave, but more strictly representing generally the unseen world, covering the whole of that hidden realm into which the spirits of men pass at death, and even embracing more or less the land lying on in the more distant future, the distinction between the state before and after the resurrection and Judgment being (I conceive) among the Jews very imperfectly marked.

Accordingly, the spirits of men, when separated from the body and removed from earth, are said to be in Hades, Sheol, or Hell; the word Hades simply expressing the "unseen region," alike by its derivation and its use; while the words Sheol and Hell may either have the same meaning, or (according to another explanation of their origin) they may rather be taken as falling in with the popular conception which regards the spirits of men as "in the under-world,"* in a hollow place (as the fancy was) beneath or within the earth, assigned as their abiding place in the intermediate state.

And now, from this description of the state in general, without any restriction of happiness or misery (in Bishop Beveridge's words), which the

* *καταχθόνια*, Phil. ii. 10, where the threefold division implies (it will be observed) the existence of an intermediate state.

term Hades represents, there emerges into greater clearness in the New Testament a view of distinct conditions of men in that state.

The blessed condition of those who have heartily striven to live to God on earth by His grace is designated as being "in Paradise" by our Lord. For the Jews at the time of our Saviour represented the spirits of men as passing into Paradise, and went on (it is stated) to distinguish two states in Paradise: one, that of those who had attained to greater heights of holiness; the other, that of those who had lived simply a decent life on earth.* And our Lord accepted the expression of "Paradise" or "Abraham's bosom"; and, in adopting it, gave His sanction to the general truth which it conveyed of the existence of God's holy ones in a separate state of bliss; a state of which, as we have seen, the distinctive feature is given by St. Paul, when he represents it as a state of being "with Christ," in special nearness to our Divine Lord.

Then, in contrast with this Paradise of the blessed, a glimpse is given of a realm in which abide the spirits of those who have not lived to God on earth. The Rich Man in the parable, however we may regard his moral and spiritual fault, is represented to us as being "in torments,"—words expressing, perhaps, by the plural form, the misery caused through all the

* Art. *Paradise*, in "Dict. of the Bible."

different elements of his being, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual, alike. And the state in which he is, is described under a figure as one separated by "a great gulph fixed" from that in which Lazarus rests, he who (as the word probably implies) had looked to God, and found help in Him alone.

The term "Gehenna," which is but the Græcised form of the Hebrew word Ge-Hinnom, or Vale of Hinnom, occurs occasionally in the New Testament Scriptures. But it more strictly corresponds to "Hell" as we now use the word—*i.e.*, the state of the persistently wicked after the resurrection. It does not appear to be ever employed in the New Testament to express distinctively the condition of the wicked in the intermediate state.

One other word there is, which occurs only once. St. Peter speaks of the evil spirits as delivered over to "Tartarus,"*—the equivalent, probably, of the "abyss" in the Gospel according to St. Luke,† the place in which they are while being "reserved unto judgment," waiting for "the time" appointed at which they are to receive their doom.

These critical considerations are necessary, in order that we may have in view more distinctly such a revelation as is afforded us in Holy Scripture of the condition of the spirit in the interval between death and the great resurrection. They are re-

* 2 Peter ii. 4.

† viii. 31; cf. Rev. xvii. 8.

quired, too, as a preparation for an inquiry into what is shown us as to our Saviour's preaching to the "spirits in prison," between the time of His death and His resurrection, with the intimations involved in it as to man's condition in the intermediate world—a subject which must be left for another time.

To sum up what is thus revealed. We seem to be shown, under the name of "Hades," the state generally into which the spirit passes at the moment of death. And, within this general realm, we have a glimpse of different regions (so to speak),—"Paradise," the abode of the blessed with Christ; and those abodes in which are the spirits of such as have not lived in holiness to God on earth; while the evil angels have similarly the region assigned to them, wherein they await the judgment of the great day.

And our inquiry thus far into the Scriptural revelations of the state after death would not be without its use if it did no more than warn us against incautiously building our views on passages drawn from the English version of the Bible, where all these various terms are confusedly translated, either expressly or by implication, by the English word "hell," which has itself passed now from its earlier meaning, and conveys to most minds the idea of the state in which the wicked are in misery after the judgment of the last day. So that, to many, a quite

erroneous impression is conveyed by sentences in which the word "Hell" is introduced: as, *e.g.*, the Article "He descended into Hell"—introduced, it will be observed, between those which refer to His death and burial, and His resurrection—of the Apostles' Creed.

Living in the comparative fulness of light which we enjoy, we hardly realise how great a debt of gratitude we owe to Him to whom that light is due. We have to place ourselves in fancy in the darkness of the past. We have to try to realise the dreary blank, the hopelessness, the gloom, which the idea of death presented in earlier days, when men could speak of it as a passage into "the land where all things are forgotten"; and when even the righteous Hezekiah trembled at the thought that when he passed from earth he "should not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living." * True, a revelation of the truth that man's spirit lives on after death had been given in the most forcible form by the translation of Enoch, in the days of the deep darkness before the flood, and of Elijah, in the times of one great national apostasy of the Jews. But this, so far as it was an acted prophecy of the future, was but as a light shining in a dark place, seen, or at least understood, probably, only by the few. It was gradually only, as the minds of men were prepared to

* See Psalms vi. 5, xxx. 9, lxxxviii. 12; Isa. xxxviii. 18.

receive the truth, that the light dawned, and the inner meaning of disclosures made in earlier times was unfolded to men's view; till Christ came and revealed God to man as the God alike of the living and the dead, the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," however long they had passed away from earth, since all "live to Him," in the unbroken continuity of an abiding though changed existence, whether in this world or in that unseen realm into which we enter through the gate of death.

I spoke before of the comfort to mourners which the truth of the continued existence of the spirit in the intermediate state, in a condition of great, though as yet imperfect happiness, and of greater nearness to Christ, is peculiarly calculated to convey; and that all the more, because the general truth stands out in strong relief, where little or nothing of what curiosity might desire to inquire into is disclosed, like a beacon-light shining clearly amid the darkness of the night.

But the whole subject supplies a great incentive and encouragement for those who are living as well. For it shows them their own life projected on into the future; and they behold themselves at once reaping there according as they have sown on earth. It reveals them to themselves, as passing at once to join the blessed company of those who are (so far) "perfected," * as the author of the Epistle to the

* Heb. xii. 23 : *τετελειωμένων*.

Hebrews writes; who have finished their earthly course,* and who now have the fruition of the nearer Presence of their Lord. They are in that state where those limitations are no longer necessary which seem needful if any revelation of God is to be given to man on earth, and where those hindrances which now check the spirit in its upward flight are removed, and where those difficulties and trials which now exist through the body, with its weakness and needs, its cravings, its associations, are at an end. It holds out before their view the beginning of the sweet "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

On the other hand, it warns them in solemn tones that the issue of this life *may* be,—that its issue in the case of the evil *must* be,—a passage into the dread society of those who have habitually rejected the light given to them, where the penalties which evil even now brings in its train are intensified, and the causes are removed which now stay its full working, and even prevent our seeing it truly as it is.

Such warnings are, unhappily, by no means unneeded, when the trust can be hazarded with an easy confidence, not only that those who have lived anything but earnest self-denying lives to God, but even those who have openly scorned the teaching of the Bible, and denounced those who labour for Christ in

* So Bishop Bull understands the word.

the world, as "always and everywhere the enemies of mankind," may pass at once into the peace which faith holds out to the faithful, as it alone can hold it out,—the peace which is with Christ in the unseen world.

It is striking to observe (it must be added in conclusion) how much light is thrown by this whole subject which we have been considering now on some of those problems, in the presence of which human thought unassisted stands confessedly perplexed.

Is there no further development attainable for man, beyond that which has been already gained, or such as may yet be anticipated hereafter in this life, through culture, and the application of laws which scientific research may ascertain? What is the true meaning of that mysterious disruption of the continuity of being—often sudden and (as it seems) premature—which we call death? Are the merely material substances, whose processes we can to some extent trace, the real agents at work in perception and sensation, in emotion, volition, thought? Or is there within man a soul, a higher power, which does but employ these material agencies as instruments through which it works? Is there, beyond the soul, a third and higher power still—a spirit which employs the offices of the soul somewhat as the soul makes use of the bodily functions, and

which employs them in order to rise up to a knowledge of a higher Being, and pierce through the darkness which surrounds on all sides "the small circle of light which we may call the universe of scientific perception,"* and behold the Unseen, whose mysterious agency meets us at every point in the circumference of our earthly knowledge, by faith?

These are problems, open questions, for the solution of which we have to look to what is revealed to us. And we learn now that a glorious prospect of a great—an indefinitely great—development and progress seems held out for man; first, in the intermediate period between death and the resurrection, and then in the ages of ages of the after-life. And we are permitted to think of man advancing on and on in the knowledge of the Infinite Perfections of God, and, with that, in more complete, more free and loving, obedience to that high moral Law of the will of God, in living to which man's true life consists; in conformity to which lies his restoration to God's likeness; and in harmonious co-operation with which (as we can in a measure discover even now) is the one path to man's highest and most perfect bliss.

Further, death is shown to us, not as a sudden break, however it may be a mysterious interruption, in our course. It appears as a passage for man—

* "Unseen Universe," p. 183.

a necessary passage, it would seem, if we are to be thoroughly purified from the stains, emancipated from the trials, to which now we are subjected in our bodily state. Thus we may speak truly, in a poet's words, of "the second birth of death,"* and say—

"There is no death ; the stars go down
To rise upon some fairer shore.
And bright in Heaven's jewelled crown,
They shine for evermore.

* * * *

"The bird-like voice whose joyous tones
Made glad these scenes of sin and strife,
Sings now an everlasting song
Around the tree of life."

Then Psychology, aided by Scripture, exhibits man in his threefold nature, compounded of body, soul, and spirit, three elements in themselves distinguishable, though closely interlinked. While Scripture itself—as it alone can—discloses to us God's loving adaptation of a threefold condition of existence for us, in perfect continuity of our deeper being, to that threefold nature wherewith we are endowed by Him, of which He has given us a slight picture and anticipation in some of those marvellous transformations which we witness in the world of insect life. Body, soul, and spirit—each has its own appropriate sphere. And each lower sphere passes up into a higher, for which it

* "In Memoriam," xlv.

is a preparation, in an ascending scale. First body, then soul, then spirit;—this seems the order of rank which, in respect of their power and influence, the elements of our being hold now. For here, on earth, the *body*, with its sense-organs, linking it to the outward world, its needs and its weaknesses, tends to exercise a predominating sway; and much of our life is necessarily occupied in regulating the bodily appetites, and providing for our bodily needs. Then we pass out of the body, “through the grave and gate of death”; and the *soul* disembodied is enabled, we conceive, to put forth, unhindered, its powers, to a great extent introspective, of feeling, thought, and will; and so rises upward towards a spiritual state. And then, last of all, in the final condition, the spirit, united again to the body—though to a *spiritual* body now, as it was joined to a *natural* body before—dwelling not in a temporary tabernacle, but in an eternal temple in which it may be fitly enshrined, shall rule with sovereign empire over body and soul, itself in closest union with God. Thus the present order shall be not only changed but reversed, and the true constitution of man restored; the body obeying at once and perfectly the dictates of the soul, and the soul itself being wholly subject to the influence of the spirit as supreme. And then, it may be, in the “new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth

righteousness," man, with the true order within himself restored, shall hold his true place in creation, as controlling it, and receiving through it ever fresh knowledge and delight, in that general "restitution of all things" which is already begun, and is hereafter to be completed, through the One Perfect Son of Man.

LECTURE IV.

CHRIST'S PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

"For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead ; that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."—1 PETER iv. 6.

WE have been occupied thus far with the question as to whether any warrant is afforded by Holy Scripture for the belief that the spirit lives on in a state of conscious existence after death ; and, if it does so exist, as to what is shown us generally with regard to its condition in the intermediate state.

But the further question arises, to which I would direct your thoughts now: Are we to suppose that the spirits of all men are "fixed in their unchanging state" (with such exception as is involved in what was said before) when once they have passed away from earth? Or have we any ground from Holy Scripture for thinking that there is room for change, for progress, for improvement, in the intermediate world?—a capability (let it be observed) without which—supposing there is an intermediate realm at

all—it is somewhat difficult to understand the idea of a final Judgment as anything more than the *declaration* and more complete *execution* of a sentence already passed more or less, in the assignment to men of their position according to their respective merits or demerits in the separate state: a view of the great Judgment which hardly accords with the importance attached to it throughout the Word of God.

Very little indeed, it has been already remarked, is revealed to us with regard to the intermediate life. And therefore we hail the more the one crucial passage which throws—which we believe was designed to throw—a strong gleam of light upon this point: not enough to show us anything in fulness of detail, and divert our thoughts from this present all-important life, but still enough to supply us with a sustaining hope.

I speak of it as “one passage.” For though there are strictly two places bearing on this point, the two seem so intimately connected, so illustrative and explanatory one of the other, that we can hardly fail to regard them as practically one.

St. Peter, in his first Epistle, desiring to support those to whom he wrote, amid the sufferings to which they were exposed, set before them Christ their Saviour as an example, who “suffered once for our sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us nearer unto God.” And then he adds, in words

which, I conceive, arose still out of the encouragement which he wished to convey, that Christ thus suffered, "being put to death indeed in the flesh, but being quickened in the spirit, in which" spiritual state "He went and preached to the spirits in prison"; * meaning, probably, to imply that even death itself could not interrupt Christ's unwearied work of Love for the salvation of men; and suggesting that those to whom he wrote should try to make *their* sufferings an occasion for manifesting the Gospel of Christ to the world. Almost immediately after which occurs the illustrative passage which I have quoted as my text, and which should be read with its context to be fully understood.

It would be impossible, within our limits, to consider the various interpretations which these words have received. The view that the "dead" here are those who were "dead in trespasses and sins," † "in prison" as "tied and bound by the chains of their sins;" and that our Lord preached to them by His Spirit, through Noah, in the days before the Flood, ‡ is one which can hard'y commend itself to any fair and unbiassed mind. Our own Church *suggests* clearly how she would have us understand St. Peter's words; though she very wisely refrains from dog-

* 1 Peter iii. 19.

† See Whitby's paraphrase.

‡ "He, the Son of God, by His eternal Spirit, went and preached to them. It was His truth in Noah's mouth."—Leighton's Works, i. 466.

matically enforcing upon the conscience of any her own view. For though she has withdrawn that portion of one of her original Articles, as framed at the Reformation, in which the first passage of St. Peter was expressly declared to apply to the preaching of our Lord in the intermediate state, yet she still intimates that she does regard this as their meaning, by directing that the passage shall be read as part of the Service on Easter Eve, the day on which we commemorate the interval between the death and the resurrection of our Lord.

And it is in his lines for Easter Eve, correspondently, that the author of the "Christian Year" writes of the state of the Saviour:—

"Sleep'st Thou indeed; or is Thy spirit fled
At large among the dead?
Whether in Eden bowers Thy welcome voice
Wake Abraham to rejoice;
Or in some drearier scene Thine eye controls
The thronging band of souls;
That, as Thy death won earth, Thine agony
Might set the shadowy world from sin and sorrow free."

Accordingly, following the guidance of our Church in her formularies, and in the teaching of some of her most accredited divines, which echoes the language of the early Church, we would look upon these most precious words of St. Peter as opening out to us a bright vista of hope with regard to man's state in the unseen world. We would understand him to teach,

what the passage which we have before considered implies, that our Lord, fulfilling all the conditions of the humanity which He had mercifully deigned to assume, "went" as on a journey—speaking in the figurative language adapted to our thought—into that intermediate realm into which all the spirits of men are to pass at death; so that we may fear the less to travel along the path which our Blessed Saviour has trodden before. But he carries on the matter, we conceive, and shows us far more than this. For he reveals to us the Saviour, passing in the spirit to the company of the spirits there, and preaching His Gospel to the spirits of the men who had been overtaken by the judgment of the Flood; and this, not to mock them by the disclosure of the blessings which they had forfeited, the love and the righteousness against which they had rebelled. Oh, no! But in order that, though they had been "judged according to men in the flesh," though they had received their doom as men in the body for deeds done in and (in a measure) through the body,* and had died—those who died in the Flood, before referred to, by a signal and terrible doom—yet still they might "live in the spirit according to God," agreeably to the redemption purchased by Jesus Christ, and now proclaimed and brought home to them by Him, in the realms of the intermediate

* διὰ τοῦ σώματος. 2 Cor. v. 10.

world. They had, indeed, missed *the* salvation offered to men at the time. They were not among the "few souls" who were saved amid the overwhelming waters of the Flood. But a higher salvation was offered to them still. And, though they had met with severe judgment, and had died, after the manner of men, the Gospel, St. Peter seems expressly to teach us, was preached to them in the intermediate world. Nay more—for this the word used in the second passage involves—the Gospel was brought home to them, the work of evangelization was carried on among them, when dead, by Christ Himself, in order that they might, even now, in their spirits, live to Him.

If St. Peter speaks here, in the first passage at least, of a special portion of mankind—those who were once disobedient in the days immediately preceding the Flood—as privileged to receive in the spirit the direct communications of Christ, we may reasonably suppose, I think, that they were singled out—somewhat as the people of Tyre and Sidon were singled out by our Lord—only as special instances, vivid illustrations, of a mercy which extended far beyond their range.

That they should be thus specially regarded, may be owing to what Bishop Horsley conceives he has found in some parts of Holy Scripture—"an anxiety (if the expression may be allowed)

on the part of the sacred writers to convey distinct intimations that the antediluvian race is not uninterested in the redemption and final retribution" of mankind at large.

And I would invite your attention to the thought as to whether this, if it be so, and certainly St. Peter's allusion to the antediluvian race, may not be owing to this—that those who lived in the pre-Abrahamic age, before any distinct community had been called out from the world as witnesses for God and conservators of His Truth, had fallen into a state of sin, and of deep and general apostasy from God, and might have seemed, if any could be, cut off from the blessings of redemption in Christ.

For, if we look at the three Dispensations of the world, as shown to us in Holy Scripture—the Antediluvian, the Jewish, and the Christian—the antediluvian race seems to have had the least knowledge of God vouchsafed to it, and to have sunk into a state of alienation from God most general and most deep; so that it is a standing evidence of the spiritual condition into which man may fall, even in the midst of high worldly attainments, if left to himself, without the presence of a visible Church, as the keeper of God's Truth and the witness for it in the world. And the passage of St. Peter may be designed to show, for one purpose of it, that,

in God's all-embracing love, these too were to have afforded to them opportunities of knowing and accepting God's offers of redemptive mercy, held out to mankind at large in our Lord, through the very presence and preaching of Christ Himself.

What exactly was the condition of "the spirits in prison who once were disobedient," is a point which is not distinctly disclosed to us; all such clear knowledge of the intermediate state as curiosity might desire being for wise purposes withheld.

We are not told, for instance, whether, although they had missed *the salvation* which was afforded to those who sought refuge faithfully from the coming wrath, they yet had seen their error and repented at the last; which the particle "once" (if it is genuine) may be intended to imply.

If this be so—if, while some few souls were saved with the more immediate salvation, others were only so saved as just to escape being lost—it will be a striking anticipation in antediluvian history of a deep spiritual distinction in the salvation of souls afterwards to be more expressly declared.

Neither are we shown whether this visit of our Lord to the spirits in prison is to be considered as one with His passage into Paradise, taking with Him the spirit of the penitent thief; a view which is only tenable, I conceive, on the supposition

mentioned above, that those referred to had indeed repented before they were finally overwhelmed.

The difficulty as to the interpretation of the words "in prison" here, has been explained in two ways: either by softening their meaning, and substituting for them the expression "in the safe keeping of God"; or, on the other hand, by regarding the intermediate state, like death itself, as essentially penal; so that all the spirits of men would be in a certain sense "in prison," even when in the Paradise of the blessed.

Both of these views are suggested by Bishop Horsley, in his famous sermon on this text. But it is to the former interpretation that he himself inclines. "The invisible mansion of departed spirits," he writes, "though certainly not a place of penal confinement to the good, is nevertheless in some respects a prison. It is a place of seclusion from the outward world—a place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security, hope, more than enjoyment. It is a place where the souls of men never would have entered, had not sin introduced death, and from which there is no exit by any natural means for those who once have entered. . . . As a place of confinement, therefore, though not of punishment, it may well be called a prison. The original word, however, in this text of the Apostle, imports not, of necessity, so much as this; but

merely a place of *safe keeping*; for so this passage might be rendered with great exactness: 'He went and preached to the spirits in safe keeping.' And the invisible mansion of departed souls is to the righteous a place of safe keeping, where they are preserved under the shadow of God's right hand."

These points we may well be content to leave in the "holy obscurity" in which they are veiled in the Word of God. And then there emerges out of the mist the great general truth, standing out all the more vividly in clearness and force, that our Lord vouchsafed to go Himself in the spirit, and preach to those who had somewhere, in the days of darkness and sin, neglected God's warnings and rejected the call given them by the Preacher of Righteousness whom He had sent.

What may have been the effect of Christ's presence in the intermediate realm on those holy souls who had lived to God, according to the light vouchsafed to them, on earth, and who were waiting, it may be, in "the yearning of expectancy, the pain of unsatisfied desire,"* we may reverently imagine, though nothing on this point is revealed to our view. But we can conceive their holy rapture, as the truth which they had dimly seen, and which type and prophecy in long array had foreshown—the event which had loomed before them in the

* From the valuable sermon of Prof. Plumptre on this text.

distance—was now clearly shown, when the Saviour came among them, Himself the Harbinger of the victory won, the redemption completed, at the very moment when the solemn words "It is finished" were uttered on the Cross. And, if so, we may well suppose that all other holy souls, as they pass away one by one from us into the unseen realm, are drawn up there into deeper love, and receive a fuller illumination with Divine truth. And it may be, I conceive, that this is the force of the word "henceforth" in the Revelation of St. John, where it is said: "Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth;"* as implying that they who rest in Paradise have now there their great, though still imperfect, bliss, since Christ has now Himself poured upon the realm of holy souls there the light of the full knowledge of redemption won for them by His death upon the Cross. This—apart from the passage of St. Peter which we are considering just now—seems the natural inference from the two foregoing truths: one, that Christ passed into Paradise at the moment of His death; and the other, that those who have truly lived to Christ here pass at their death to be with Him, as St. Paul expressly declares, in the intermediate world.

But it is with respect to a different class that the

* Rev. xiv. 13.

words of St. Peter here, if we understand them rightly, emphatically speak. There are many and many, we believe, who pass away without having ever had the true chord struck which might have wakened up the inner harmonies of the soul; with whom those higher thoughts and feelings, which are found sometimes in most unpromising circumstances, and under a most unlikely exterior, have never been evoked. They have never been brought under the blessed influence of that Christian Faith, whose great characteristic it is that it calls forth all that is noblest and best in man, and so raises him to a higher sphere. Then, too, there are differences of inward character and outward circumstance here, which exercise a mysterious influence on the development of the moral and spiritual being; and over which we have, at most, only a partial control. Nothing strikes a thoughtful mind more than the different planes of being in which men live and move on earth, and the difficulty experienced by those in one level of appreciating, or even comprehending, the thoughts and feelings of those in another plane. There are different strata, so to speak, of emotional and intellectual life among men in the world. And these different strata, no doubt, may and do have their respective types of excellence. There are, to some extent, virtues and graces distinctively belonging to each. But there are some forms which we think of as the most exquisite,

the most divine, which need a certain state of moral and intellectual and spiritual culture—to some degree a certain outward condition—if they are to reach the full limits of their earthly perfection; somewhat as there are flowers of surpassing beauty which can only thrive under certain atmospheric conditions, and which demand essentially their appropriate soil. And it is as we think of all this—as we realize the spiritual difficulties which lie in the way of many in this present world: beset, perhaps, by temptation; struggling for existence in ignorance and unceasing toil; apart from the beneficent influence of sympathy, the opportunities for advancing in knowledge and grace which others enjoy—that we welcome the message of Christ's preaching to those who had rejected the offers made to them in the days of ignorance and widespread crime. And we think how chords may be struck which never vibrated here on earth; how thoughts and emotions which lay dormant here may be called forth; how inequalities may be lessened—when present differences of outward circumstance and physical constitution at least are removed. We catch a hope that those who have not become petrified in all their being through deadly antagonism to goodness and to God may hear Christ's voice in the spirit-world, and be drawn upward and onward in the spirit, illumined in their inner being with the light of the knowledge, won by the present sympathy, kindled

by the love, of Him who gave up Himself to death for the salvation of their souls.

One other aspect there is of these passages, if they have been interpreted rightly, on which a few words must be said. The question is raised sometimes, in no irreverent spirit, as to why the Incarnation of our Divine Redeemer should have been necessary, in the counsels of God, in order that man should be pardoned, enlightened, sanctified, and thus saved, in Him. And though the reason of the truth is not explained, the truth itself is confirmed, by that preaching of our Lord to the spirits in prison on which we have dwelt now. For if we are right in understanding that they waited there through all the intervening years, and only received the light of pardon and deliverance when Christ came, fulfilling the conditions of our humanity, into the spirit-world, —we seem to have a further illustration of the apparent law of God's purposes, that, as the kinsman only could redeem his kinsman from earthly bondage according to the Levitical Law, so, according to that higher Law of which this was the type and shadow, it was only by assuming our nature, by becoming our Kinsman, our Brother, as the Son of Man, that God Himself would open the prison-house and say to the prisoners everywhere, whether on earth or in the separate state, "Come forth,"—come forth to the liberty of the pardon, the light, the

grace, of God's children regenerated, restored, in Christ.

Most deep and mysterious words and thoughts these on which we have meditated now. May God carry them home to our hearts, if in our interpretation of their significance we have been guided aright. May He, the God of Truth, pardon us and enlighten us, if we have not rightly understood the words which He has given us, and failed in our earnest endeavour to search out truly what He would mercifully disclose to our comfort, our hope, our prayer.

LECTURE V.

POSSIBILITIES OF THE FUTURE LIFE.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"—GEN. xviii. 25.

IN considering what Holy Scripture teaches as to the condition of men after death, we have been occupied thus far with the question as to whether it does point to the conscious existence of the spirit in the period intervening between death and the resurrection; and, if it does, as to what is shown us with regard to the different conditions under which the spirit may so exist, and the possibilities of change and improvement then.

We go on now to inquire cautiously and reverently, but as fairly and comprehensively as we can, what is revealed to us in Holy Scripture as to the condition of man after the general resurrection, and the Judgment of the great day.

And we are met at the outset by a difficulty as to a large class of persons, with regard to whom we feel the more, the more we meditate upon their case, that they can hardly be thought of as falling within the

range of those conditions to which the judgment of God, as expressly disclosed to us, is declared to apply.

We can mark more or less distinctly the blessed company of those who have lived on earth the life of the true "saints" of God, living above the world though in the world, as always "seeing Him who is invisible"; walking, in their deeper being, by faith and not by sight; diffusing, partly in a direct and conscious, still more in an indirect and unconscious manner, the light of the knowledge of the truth which they themselves enjoyed. We set before our view, on the other hand, the woeful body of those who have resolutely and wilfully—"after" their "hardness and impenitent heart" *—rejected the knowledge of God, as given in a measure through conscience, the echo of God's voice in the soul, and, still more fully, in the Person of Christ our Lord; who have refused the offers made to them in the Gospel of pardon and light and grace, resisted the stirrings of the Holy Spirit within them, persistently continued in some form of sin—more spiritual and refined, or more carnal and debasing, according as their temperament and circumstances may have been—and who have thus opposed and put away from themselves, and also "held back" † in unrighteousness from others, that Divine truth which it was their duty and their privilege to have lived by themselves,

* Rom. ii. 5; see whole chapter.

† Rom. i. 18.

and transmitted by their life and teaching, as torch-bearers handing on the torch in the race to other individuals and generations of men.

But now, apart from these strongly contrasted classes, stands another and a more or less distinct class,—a neutral zone (as it were) of spiritual being,—a class distinct even to human eye, and quite distinct, we doubt not, to the unerring Eye of God, whose case, and whose condition in the future world, it is necessary to study first, in order to avoid even an appearance of confounding it with that of those who are spoken of in Holy Scripture as the impenitent, the sinners, the ungodly, on the one hand; or, on the other, with that of those who have striven to live truly up to their calling, their high privilege, by God's grace, and who are described as the holy ones, the saints, of the Lord. For it is just this confusion, I conceive, which produces what is the greatest stumbling-block to many earnest, thoughtful minds, causing them to feel a difficulty with regard to the Scriptural view of God's dealings, as represented in the unguarded teaching of some in the Church.

Look out in thought for a moment upon the world. Try to embrace in fancy the varied conditions of the present generation of men now living upon the earth. Think what a vast multitude there are of whom we cannot speak as either deeply and truly accepting, or as wilfully rejecting God.

Think, for instance, of the multitude of infants who pass away hour by hour, ere ever their faculties have been sufficiently developed, so far as we can tell, to enable them to rise above the lower stages of conscious existence at all. Think then of the great, and sadly increasing, number of those who grow up in a state of idiotcy, and of those whose psychical and spiritual powers, once only too vigorous, perhaps, have now become deranged,

“ Like sweet bells jangling out of tune ; ”

and for whom the utmost that the loving care of an enlightened philanthropy can do is to pour in upon the darkness such little light as occasional temporary intervals of a return of reason may admit. Go on to think of the millions that

“ shall live and die,

Who ne'er shall call upon their Saviour's Name,”*

lying in heathen darkness, with, at best, only the most false conceptions of God, as a Being stern, cruel, capricious, to be dreaded, propitiated, or appeased; not as a Father of perfect justice and boundless love, asking of His children a reciprocity of holy, obedient love for Him. Think, once again, of those very many in Christian lands, at whose bedside the minister of the gospel again and again stands perplexed, in view of the future upon which they are ere long (it may be) to be launched,—those

* Shelley.

who do give evidence that their hearts are indeed truly and earnestly turned to God in an agony of fear at the last, though only at the close of a long life of indifference or more direct sin; still more, of those who have lived more or less upright, blameless lives, but in whom—not, perhaps, to any great extent, through their own immediate fault—the spiritual faculties seem very much dormant or dead, so that they little (apparently) realise the great truths of Holy Scripture, as it would reveal to them God, creating of pure love, redeeming, sanctifying man; and hardly enter at all into the idea of *true* repentance, as a sorrow for sin *as sin* in its manifold aspects,* leading to a deep and entire conversion of the heart to God, and an earnest purpose of consecrating life henceforth in loving, adoring gratitude to Him of whom it has been beautifully said that He “measures life by love.” Think of all this vast multitude, as they stand at this moment before the Eye of God. And then multiply it by all the generations passed since time began upon our earth, and by those yet to be called into being, before the moment when the Divine proclamation shall go forth that “time shall be no longer,” that this temporal scene, with its present opportunities, shall be no

* As a failure to attain the true end of man's being (*ἀμαρτία*); as a transgression of God's law, the expression of the eternal rule of right (*ἀνομία*); as implying a wrong state of the spirit in its relation to God, and in its relation to our fellow-men (*ἀδικία*).

further prolonged—and say, What shall we think of the future of all this mass of human lives, when their destiny is assigned them by an All-Righteous Judge at the last great day? If Holy Scripture sets before us only two possible conditions of future existence; if all pass at once either into the perfection of heavenly everlasting bliss in the presence of an all-holy God, or into utter hopeless woe,—if this be so, what are we to think of the future of those whom I have described, and the like? Can we think of them as fitted to be made “equal to the angels,” admitted to the fulness of joy in the holy presence of God? Yet can we think of them as condemned with those who have lived and died in wilful rebellion against God, cast out into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels? Or can we think of them as miraculously changed in a moment into “meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light,”—a change for which we have no warrant in Holy Scripture, while it is opposed to the analogy of all which is shown to us as to God’s dealings with our world?

I have ventured to state the difficulty here as fairly and as forcibly as I can. It is one which troubles earnest, thoughtful minds. Still more, it is expressed in some portions of the higher-toned literature of our time. Such difficulties it is our duty, as teachers of Holy Scripture, as ministers of the Gospel of Christ, to face fairly, and either

to avow honestly that we cannot meet them, or to point out so much towards a satisfactory solution of them as we may consider to be offered in the Word of God. Any one who has never entertained such difficulties himself, may at any moment encounter them at the present day. And he ought not, if possible, to meet them wholly unprepared. They are difficulties which must press upon the mind of any earnest minister of the Gospel quite as much as they can do upon the mind of any layman,—nay, by the very necessity of the case, very much more.

Now, with regard to the larger part, at least, of the cases referred to here, it might be enough to say, as a *first* and general point, that, according to the principle laid down in the first Lecture, Holy Scripture is concerned almost exclusively with the condition of those who have had opportunities on earth of knowing and serving God as revealed to man in Christ, and who have either heartily embraced, or persistently rejected, the privileges which they thus enjoyed; so that we should not look in it for any full solution of questions relating to those to whom such advantages have been denied in this present world. But there are some points which give just an *intimation*, a *suggestion*, as to how such cases as those referred to may be regarded and dealt with by a God of perfect justice and truth, of whom we

are told that "Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne," * and by whom, we are sure, every one shall be judged *equitably*, as Bishop Butler expresses it, † in exact proportion according to that which he has had, not according to that which he has not had, of capacity for knowing and serving God; ‡ even as, probably, if we could pierce through the world of appearance, and see things more as they truly are in the inner sphere of being, we should find a far more equitable adjustment than we commonly think of even here on earth; each one even now receiving very much in reality the "due reward" of his character and deeds.

Then, as a *second* point, it must be carefully noticed that there are two distinct lines of thought in Holy Scripture, which must admit of being reconciled in some way, although the manner in which they are to be so reconciled may not at once appear.

On the one hand, to quote but one or two passages out of many which will suggest themselves to your thoughts, our Lord speaks of His own as a "little flock." He states distinctly that "many are called, but few chosen"; that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

On the other hand, and in remarkable contrast

* Ps. lxxxix. 14, P. B. version.

† Anal., Part ii., ch. vi.

‡ See especially Rom. ii.

with the foregoing passages, there are places in which the Redemption wrought by Christ for man is spoken of in terms which represent it as all-embracing, without limits of any kind. The prophet Isaiah, beholding in vision the coming Saviour, declared that "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of *us all*." "I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all men* unto me," are the words of our Lord Himself. "As in Adam *all* die," St. Paul writes, "even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive." And again: "Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon *all men* unto condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of One the free gift came *upon all men* unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience *many* were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall *many* be made righteous,"—words which are far more emphatic in the language of the original text. For there is (as Bentley long ago acutely observed) an antithesis throughout between the οἱ πολλοί, "the many," and ὁ εἷς, "the One," which makes the "many" equivalent to the "all" of the preceding verse, comprehending the whole multitude, the entire species of mankind, exclusive of "the One." And, once more, St. Paul says, in a similar way, that "God hath concluded *all* in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon *all*": a thought which forced from him the fervent exclamation: "O, the depth of the riches both of the

wisdom and knowledge of God!"* Correspondently, St. John declares that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour *of the world*; "not to condemn the world, but that *the world* through Him might be saved"; that Christ is "the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the sins *of the whole world*."† He declares that "That (the Incarnate Word) was the true Light which lighteth *every man* coming into the world":‡ "an assertion," it has been said, "as plain as it was possible to make it—that Christ (at one period or other of human existence) affords *to all* sufficient light to make the absence of faith in Himself inexcusable; for the light is said to be given 'that all men through Him might believe' (ver. 7)."[§] And St. Peter speaks of a "restitution *of all things*"; "of which," he adds very remarkably, "God hath spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began."||

Words can hardly be stronger than these, which yet might be multiplied indefinitely, to express the extent—let it be said for a moment, the universality—of the Redemption wrought by Christ. And if we may not so interpret some passages of Holy Scripture, as to make them repugnant to others which speak in a different strain; if we are told (as we saw before) that "few are chosen"; if it is written

* Rom. xi. 32, 33.

‡ i. 9.

† St. John iv. 14, iii. 17; 1 St. John ii. 2.

§ Dunn, p. 257.

|| Acts iii. 21.

respecting some that they shall "rise to condemnation," "the condemnation of hell," * we shall feel that these seemingly conflicting groups of passages must be balanced, and a reconciliation between them essayed. We shall see—as will be shown more fully hereafter—that we are constrained to admit that some do unhappily miss the blessings held out by God in Christ through persistent sin; and that therefore the universality of Christ's redemption must apparently be limited, the expression "all" in the passages above cited being taken (according to the common use of language) with such exceptions as the teaching of Holy Scripture elsewhere may imply. But we shall recognise also the truth, that we have warrant from Holy Scripture itself for entertaining a far wider hope than that which is commonly held among men, at least upon Scriptural grounds. We shall feel that we cannot, in any fair spirit of criticism, so interpret those very many passages in God's Word which speak of the universality of Christ's Redemption in the most emphatic terms, as to denude them of all their force, by saying that they mean no more than this—that Christ's Redemption was indeed in purpose wrought for all the world, while yet the blessings of it are in fact denied, in terrible mockery, to the vast multitude of mankind; that they are lost to millions of souls who have never

* St. John v. 29; St. Matt. xxiii. 33.

had the opportunity, or been endowed with the power, of knowing Christ; that they are actually enjoyed only by the privileged few, who have grace given them here on earth to know and accept and serve Him as their Lord.

There is still one more, a *third* and last point, to be borne in mind. There are just intimations given, though no more—sometimes in the general spirit of Holy Scripture, sometimes in its very words—of a work to be carried on in the “ages of ages”—itself a most remarkable expression as applied to the future—which stretch out far as thought can reach in the world beyond the grave.

Thus we are told of the “eternal purpose” of God (*i.e.*, literally of His “purpose with reference to the ages”),* presumably including at least the ages yet to come. Similarly, in an earlier passage of the same Epistle, St. Paul speaks of a “dispensation of God with reference to the fulness of the seasons of opportunity”† for gathering together anew all things in heaven and earth into a unity under their Divine Head. Passages these, which seem to give a glimpse of a work to be carried on for man’s salvation, similar to that which is being carried on now, though under circumstances different, and in some respects more favourable, by that loving Redeemer, that “Eternal

* Ephes. iii. 11 : *πρόθεσις τῶν αἰώνων*.

† Ephes. i. 10 : *Οἰκονομία τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν*.

King," who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for 'the ages yet to come'";—a work in which, it would appear, those who have been "faithful in few things," who have used well the talents—first, the "unrighteous mammon"* of earthly and temporal advantages, and then the lasting spiritual gifts, which are made more truly their own—committed to their trust here on earth, may, in their several measures, be permitted to take a part, exchanging a higher ministry for a lower one, "reaching by duty's path a life beyond the life they lost."

In harmony with this, it will be noticed that we are shown that to some it may be granted hereafter to be at the right and the left hand of the Lord, as in positions of special honour; that there are "first" and "last," "great and small," referred to more than once among the servants of the Lord in the future state; † that there are "many mansions" in the world to come, adapted, we conclude, to the degrees of grace attained; that "one star differs from another star in glory"; words which, as Bishop Bull remarks, may mark the differences between men in the future world, and not merely the difference between the present as contrasted with the future condition of men; that our Lord is declared to us to be the "Saviour of all men," but "specially of them that believe" on Him, on earth,—as if there might be

* St. Luke xvi. 11.

† Rev. xi. 18, xix. 5.

to some a second "blessing" "reserved," and to be granted, even when the blessing of the birthright has not been gained; that Holy Scripture speaks in mysterious language of a "first resurrection," and of others not living until the period embraced by the lives of those who attained to the first resurrection is complete;* that many types in the old dispensation point to a "first fruits," an elect few—represented by the definite mystical number of "twelve times twelve thousand," in the vision of St. John †—preceding, but only preceding, a more large and general ingathering of the great spiritual harvest of the world—the great multitude, whose voice is "as the voice of many waters," ‡ rising up in adoration of God. §

And then, in further illustration of this point, it must be considered that Holy Scripture speaks of the unforgiving as to be detained in prison, "till they shall have paid the uttermost farthing,"—as if to teach us, perhaps, that there may yet be room for full repentance and a correspondent forgiveness hereafter, even though the unforgiving spirit has brought its just condemnation from God on earth;—that it refers to some sins, or rather, probably, to a state of sin, for which there is never forgiveness, "neither in this world," this age, "nor yet in the world to

* Rev. xx. 5.

† Rev. xiv. 1, 4.

‡ Rev. xix. 6.

§ All this subject is specially well illustrated from types in the Old Testament in Mr. Jukes' "Restitution of All Things."

come,"—words which at least admit of being interpreted to imply, that the sins which do not spring from, and involve, a state of irremediable antagonism to God, may gain their remission, when fully acknowledged and repented of, in the future world;—that the word employed to express the punishment of some in the future life emphatically marks *reformatory* discipline,* when another word as distinctively expressing *retributive* chastisement† was ready to the writer's hand, and, which is *most important*, was *expressly employed* by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he wished to describe the punishment, the terrible retribution, of those who had "trampled under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace";‡—that we are told that it shall be "more tolerable" in some way for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for those cities which wilfully rejected the teaching of Christ;—and, similarly, that those who knew not their Master's will, and so sinned in ignorance, are to be punished with "few stripes"—words which, to say the least, imply (like some of the passages cited before) an inequality, a distinction of lot, quite alien to the idea that all pass at once, either into the perfection of happiness and glory, or into the utmost condition of agony and shame, which

* Κόλασις.

† Τιμωριά.

‡ Heb. x. 29.

is, if I mistake not, the view very commonly entertained.

It still further carries out and corroborates this argument, to consider that St. Paul speaks of Christ's propitiation as applying to "sins that are past," * as if to indicate that those who lived before Christ's coming may yet have the opportunity offered them of accepting the pardon held out to them "in the forbearance of God" in Christ;—that with regard to heathen nations, as, *e.g.*, Moab and Ammon and Elam, it is foreshown in ancient prophecy that the Lord will some time "bring again their captivity," and make them "rejoice with God's people";†—that even of Sodom and her daughters it is said that they shall "return to their former estate";‡ while of the chosen people themselves it is written that, in some way, "All Israel shall be saved" §—(with the exception, no doubt, implied of "every soul that doeth evil, of the Jew and also of the Gentile") ||—the Jew being made co-heir with the Gentile, as the Gentile had before entered into the inheritance of the Jew.

Putting these points together, I think you will agree with me that there is an intimation given us—we are to look for no more—that those who have had little, if any, opportunity or power of

* Rom. iii. 25.

‡ Ezek. xvi. 55.

† Jerem. xlviii. 47, xlix. 6, 39.

§ Rom. xi. 16.

|| Rom. ii. 9.

knowing and accepting the Truth of God, and those who have not lived up to their calling as Christians "called to be saints," while yet they have not persistently lived throughout life in rejection of God, opposition to such light as they possessed, may have opportunities of knowing God and living to Him in the ages of ages which stretch out beyond the grave,—as we have already seen a glimpse of such opportunity for amendment being offered in the time between death and resurrection in the intermediate world; though that bliss cannot be theirs which is promised to God's holy and faithful servants, both in the intermediate life in Paradise, and, still more, after the resurrection in their perfected state.

And thus we see that there is more ground than we might on a superficial view of Holy Scripture have supposed, for such a "larger hope" as was entertained by some writers of weight in the earlier ages of the Church, and has been revived of late by men of sober and thoughtful mind, such as the present Dean of St. Paul's, who writes: "I should be disloyal to Him whom I believe in and worship as the Lord of Truth, if I doubted that honest seeking would find Him. Even if it do not find Him here, man's destiny stops not at the grave; and many, we may be sure, will find Him there, who did not know Him here"; words akin to those written by

Luther long before: "God forbid that I should limit the time for acquiring faith to the present life. In the depths of the Divine Mercy there may be opportunity to win it in the future state." *

Nor is it any really valid objection to such a view as is here suggested, that no direct mention is made in Holy Scripture of anything in the future state akin to that period of probation on earth, which is distinctly brought to a close for each one at death. For it is, as has been said all along, to the practical lessons as to what *are* our present duties, opportunities and aids, leading up to future blessedness or loss—not to speculative questions as to what *may be* granted in the future—that the direct view of Holy Scripture is purposely confined.

It may be said in a similar way of objection, and said most truly, that these anticipations, surmises, hopes—for they are no more—are based on no clear, broad statements of Holy Scripture, but upon hints scattered up and down, nice adjustment of passages which appear to conflict. Be it so. This is just the way in which the author of the "Analogy," the very greatest of our philosophical theologians, in a memorable passage which will be familiar to many here, declares that truth is to be sought out in the Word of God.† It is just by taking broad, plain statements

* Quoted by Canon Farrar, p. 218.

† "For this is the way in which all improvements are made: by thoughtful men tracing out obscure hints, as it were, dropped us by nature

alone, apart (perhaps) from their context, without comparing them with other parts of Holy Scripture, without referring to places in earlier Scriptures from which they may be drawn, and from a reference to which their true meaning is to be ascertained, and then, probably, drawing inferences from them which, however apparently logical, introduce a human element into Divine Truth, which like the snow (as it has been said) cannot be touched without being defiled,—it is thus that we constantly bring God's Word into disrepute, by causing what is really only human error to pass current in the Church as the doctrine of the Word of Unerring Truth. It is by our viewing it through the medium of human wisdom that we pervert, often, the pure Truth of God.

If there be some, unhappily, to whom the idea of the acceptance with God of others besides the elect is a stumbling-block, who cannot think at all of the heathen, the ignorant, and the like, as embraced in any way within the terms of the Covenant of Promise in Christ, let them take warning by the thought that it was the exclusiveness of the Jews which was one great ground of their rejection of the Saviour, who came to call sinners to repentance of every nation and every class; that it was when St. Paul spoke of accidentally, or which seem to come into our minds by chance."—Butler, *Anal.*, Part. ii., ch. 3.

his mission to the *Gentiles* from his Lord, that the Jews cried out in wrath, "Away with such a fellow from the earth!" *

But, on the other hand, for every fair and earnest mind, I cannot conceive any subject more full of glory and hope than the point on which I have touched with you at this time. It is as a bright gleam of sunlight bursting through the wintry gloom, and foreshadowing a glad summer-time to come. It gives us hope for those multitudes, in ages past, present, or to come, of heathen nations, or in Christian lands, who have passed away, or who are yet to pass away, of whom we cannot think as fitted for God's all-holy presence, while yet we shrink from conceiving that they can be joined with utter sinners, condemned to the fire prepared for the evil angels in the eternal world. It just meets the main point of the difficulty felt by so many in reconciling some statements made as if on the authority of Scripture with what Reason teaches us as to the justice and the love of God. It suggests the glorious thought—(to say more now would be to anticipate what must be considered more fully at another time)—that there may be a great work, a great evangelical ministry, to be carried on for Christ in the eternal ages by those who have lived truly to God in Christ here,

* Acts xxii. 22.

when they are made equal to the angels, those blessed spirits of whom we are told that they minister to those who are to be made heirs of salvation. It opens the door of reasonable hope for those who have indeed sadly neglected their opportunities on earth, but who yet have turned to God ere it was too late, through His grace,—a hope that they too, though it be “as by fire,” may yet be among the number of those who are saved by an all-merciful God in Christ. It brings before our view, in the most forcible way, the greatness of the privileges which we possess as living in the full light of the knowledge of God revealed to mankind in Christ, and the great responsibility laid upon us for our right use of the light which we thus enjoy. It is so far from encouraging any in sin, that it only shows more forcibly how great, even at the best, must be the forfeiture of blessing incurred by all those who do not earnestly give themselves to God’s service through life, and who therefore stand unapproved * as His true faithful disciples, victors in the great contest with evil, at the last day—and that (it may be) after having themselves proclaimed to others the rules of the spiritual contest, and the conditions of obtaining the prize;† —while it exhibits the terrible danger, intensifies the guilt, of those who brave “the wrath of the

* Ἀδόκιμοι.

† 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Lamb," go on wilfully sinning against the light of the knowledge of so loving a Father, so just and yet so merciful a God, who would have *all men* to be saved, who sent His Son to seek and to save that which was lost, and of that Saviour who seeks diligently for the erring, the lost ones, *till He finds them*, and brings them back to the fold. And thus it darkens the sinfulness of the obstinately sinful ones; while it holds out to the penitent the bright gleam of hope, and enables the Christian minister to speak more trustfully than he otherwise could do at the death-bed side. It opens out a comforting view of a possibility of future opportunity to be granted to those who have lived in ignorance, and who have not gone on sinning wilfully against admitted light. It supplies to God's earnest holy ones a glimpse of a blessed ministry hereafter to be carried on for and with their loving Redeemer in the ages of ages reaching on beyond this present little moment of life on earth. It affords a fresh revelation of God's perfect justice, His infinite mercy, His long-suffering love.

I fear I may have overtaxed your attention, and spoken for once at unusual length. It has been hard to avoid doing this. It is easy, comparatively, to lay down dogmatically in a few lines opinions arrived at. It is difficult, almost impossible, for a writer to lead his hearers along the road which

his own mind has traversed, not wishing them to accept his thoughts as anything, but only desiring to guide them in considering fairly, thoughtfully, reverently, what seems to be the teaching of Holy Scripture with regard to such a great special aspect of our Blessed Saviour's Redemption as that which has come before our thoughts to-day.

LECTURE VI.

THE FUTURE STATE OF THE BLESSED.

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands."—REV. vii. 9.

IF it is, as was said at the outset, a natural instinct which prompts us to wish to know what is to be the future of others near and dear to us, and of ourselves—to look down the vista of the earthly future, with its various stages and its final end—it is equally natural that we should try to pierce the veil, and discover what is to be our condition, what our work, in that state to which we feel we are drawing nearer year by year, and into which we hope to pass one day, there to be with the redeemed, the blessed, for ever, sharing in their glory and their joy.

And yet singularly little, of a positive character, is disclosed to us in Holy Scripture as to the state into which those who have indeed lived to God, in Christ, through the Spirit, are to be admitted when they rise, with their bodies and spirits re-united,

at the Great Day. The material imagery in which (as was remarked before) the condition of man hereafter, for good or for evil, is shadowed forth to us in its general spirit and character, cannot be literally understood. It cannot adequately exhibit the transfigured materiality, (if I may so express it,) of our spiritualized existence in the after world.

Indeed, as if to enforce upon our minds the point that these adumbrations of the future state are only to be figuratively understood, it is by a group of *negative* illustrations that it is presented to us in other parts of the Word of God, indicating to us what heaven is *not*, by contrast with our present state on earth. It was shown to St. John in the Vision that there should be "no more sea,"—the emblem of severance, and variableness, and storm. And again he was directed to write for us that there should be "no night there,"—the figure of spiritual darkness and ignorance and error, of danger and sorrow and pain, of seasons of rest and repose alternating with labour, made necessary by the wear and tear of bodily and mental activity here.

And, in this way, we are led to lift up our thoughts into a higher sphere. We are taught to think of heaven not so much as it is a material condition, but rather as it is a spiritual state. We may regard it, indeed, as a condition of glory and peace and

joy, of unwearying activity, of re-union with loved ones never to be parted from us more. But, above all this, we shall think of it as a state of grateful, adoring communion with God, our Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and life in Him; of entire conformity to His all-holy will; of perfect, unselfish love. This, this is heaven, anticipated on earth. This is to be heaven realized in the future world.

In accordance with this it is, that while so little is definitely revealed to us as to our condition hereafter, what *is* explicitly declared to us relates mainly to our present life on earth as a preparation for the after state.

Thus, in the passage from the Revelation of St. John, of which the words quoted above form the opening, and which may be taken as gathering up very much what is shown to us, in that Book more especially, as to our future state, it will be observed that we are *first* told the *conditions* or *circumstances* under which a fitness for heaven is usually attained; then, *secondly*, the *spiritual state* which must have been acquired on earth, under those conditions, as a qualification for the life of heaven. After which, as a *third* point, a glimpse is given of the *glory and happiness* of those who are accounted worthy to attain that blessed state, having been brought into fitness for it on earth through God's grace.

And, first, the blessed ones are represented as those

who have come out of, and therefore have passed through, great tribulation ; as if affliction were almost an essential condition of our attaining to the higher life with God on earth, and therefore of being admitted to its rewards in the world beyond. And thus Holy Scripture explains to us the meaning, solves for us more or less the mystery, of pain in its various forms. Pain and sorrow, from which we instinctively shrink so much, are really God's blessed gifts, to be accepted from His hand as among His chief means of drawing up the spirit to Him. And I conceive that the experience of all who have gone through times of sorrow well would testify that these have been the seasons in which they were brought into closest spiritual union with God. And this also explains, it may be remarked in passing, the seeming anomaly in God's Providence that His faithful servants appear sometimes the most afflicted and tried ; these trials and afflictions being designed, we conceive, to strengthen what was good in them, and discover their weaknesses, and so deepen their character, and raise them up to greater heights of spiritual life.

Men have loved to find parabolic illustrations of this truth in those natural processes from which the metaphorical word "tribulation" takes its rise. They have referred to the images of the *crushing* of the grape, needed that its juice may flow forth ; of

the *grinding* of the corn; of the *breaking up* of the hard soil, in order that the good seed may take root and grow.

Affliction, indeed, as an instrument in God's hand, performs its good work in many ways. For it detaches the spirit from too great interest in present things; it creates a sense of dependence, especially of dependence on a Higher Power; it enables us to sympathise with others; or it evokes their sympathy, and exercises an influence on them in various ways, directly and indirectly, for their good. And God's holy ones have accordingly admitted that they have found the entrance to the house of mourning more profitable than that to the house of mirth; that it was good for them to have been in trouble—the trouble of physical pain and privation, the trouble of bereavement and moral grief, the trouble of intellectual perplexity—above all, of spiritual sorrow in the consciousness of sin. And they take up the spirit of the Psalmist's words: "Before I was troubled I went wrong; but now have I kept Thy law." Hereafter, it may be, we shall feel more fully that God doth not willingly afflict His children; that He does but desire that "their light affliction which is but for a moment" comparatively, even when heaviest and longest, should work out in them and for them a far exceeding eternal good.

But, secondly, affliction, precious as it may thus

be, as leading to "an eternal weight of glory" for those who use it well, is still only an instrument and means. Its end is beyond itself. It is valuable negatively rather than in a positive way, as removing hindrances rather than as directly producing good. It is only too possible that the fire, which should soften and purify, may but harden instead. The aid of the Holy Spirit is needed, in order that sorrow may have "her perfect work"; that good impressions may be received, good feelings stirred, good resolutions formed; and then, that these may be deepened, and made lasting and effectual for permanent good. But when through it the lower elements of our nature have loosened their grasp of earthly things, ceased to drag down our higher being and cloud its view, then the spirit, if only it be illumined with Divine light and upheld by the Divine Spirit, sees itself more truly as it is, in its relation to God and to mankind. Then, through that *convincing* power of the Holy Spirit, of which our Lord spoke, it discerns more clearly its fault, its sin;—not its particular transgressions merely, but its sin generally, *as sin*, its spirit of evil, in that it has not lived in the thought of God in Christ, actuated by the love of Him. It sees that, engrossed in selfish thought for its own interests, it has little striven to advance God's glory in the world, taken little care to promote the well-being

of others, the great law of duty, the special fulfilment of God's will. And therefore it has fled for refuge to the one all-sufficient Atonement held out to it; it has "washed its robes in the blood of the Lamb"; it has entered into the mind of its great Redeemer, and resolved to give itself henceforth unreservedly to fulfil God's will by His grace, and to live in the life of its ever-living Lord.

It may be said: Is this all? Is there to be no mention of the holiness of spirit which is a requisite surely for admission to the presence of an all-holy God?

But, in fact, so essentially is this idea of conformity to the spirit and the mind of Christ involved in the notion of all true acceptance of the Atonement and reconciliation with God gained for man in Christ, that personal holiness does not need to be mentioned in express words here, as a necessary characteristic of the blessed, the holy ones, as they stand accepted by God in Christ at the great day. The terrible error, not altogether discarded still, if not that we may "continue in sin that grace may abound," yet that grace *will* abound, that pardon for sin *will* be granted, if only we look to Christ, while we yet continue *in* sin, derives no encouragement from the Word of God. Christ came to save us from sin, to rescue us from its power, not merely to set us free

from its penalty here and hereafter. He came to re-mould us into holiness in all our being, not to deliver us from the just, the inevitable, issues which evil-doing and evil-being involve. If the spirit is washed from the stains of sin in Christ, it has also "put on Christ"; it is clothed with "the righteousness of the saints" from Him. Coming forth from death into new life, it strives to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," filled with the love of its Redeemer and its Lord. If we have looked truly to God for pardon in Christ, we shall assuredly be striving continually to grow more and more into perfect conformity to God's will in Him.

These, then, are the special *means or conditions* through which we are brought into fitness for eternal life with God; and these are the *qualifications*, this the *character*, of those who may look to attain in Christ to the resurrection of the just.

Now, to pass to the third and last point, we think what is to be their *state*, what their *work*, in that life on which they enter then?

And as to this, there is less disclosed to our view. They are shown to us as bearing in their hands branches of palm, by a figure drawn, most probably, from the ceremonial of the Feast of Tabernacles among the Jews, which was designed to keep up the memory of their sojourn for forty years in the wilderness when they had reached the promised

land.* For they have finished their journey through earth, with its trials and difficulties, its enemies from without to be resisted, its temptations to murmuring and distrust and despair to be met, of which the wilderness was a type. They have reached their true land of promise. They have entered into "the rest which remaineth" for the people of the Lord. No troubles from without beset them there. No disorder from within can afflict them there. For the body with which they are raised is a spiritual body, wholly subject (as we conclude the expression means), with all the rest of man's being, to the spirit as supreme, itself (as was said before) in perfect harmony with the Spirit of God. And if it be so, as has been said, that "with every advance in organization there is a corresponding advance in mind,"† we may well conceive how our powers of thought and feeling may be indefinitely extended in their range and their power, and how, with that, our sources of highest, purest delight may be increased.

No doubt, the one point towards which, as by an overpowering attraction, the spirit with all the energy of its being must be for ever drawn, will be the

* "This 'palmiferous company' (to use Henry More's words), these happy palmers, do not stand before the throne as conquerors, but as those who keep the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Rest, of all the weary toil in the wilderness accomplished and ended."—Archbishop Trench's "Epistles to the Seven Churches," p. 110.

† Prof. Allman.

redemption gained for it in God's love through the Eternal Son. No doubt, its highest work must for ever be to offer its homage to Him to whom it owes its restoration to happiness, its reconciliation to the Father, its sanctification, through the Holy Spirit, into fitness for its eternal home, that it may dwell there, together with all God's holy and redeemed children, in the light of the very presence of God.

But still, glimpses are given of a work to be done, of a ministry to be carried on, in the ages of ages of the future world, higher in degree according to the good use made of the talents entrusted to our care on earth, the fitness acquired for the further service of the Lord. Rest is not inactivity. Of the angels round the throne we are told that they are "ministering spirits." There was deep meaning, we think, in our Lord's words, when He said: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The discipline and effort of early life ends not in itself. It is designed to prepare us to fulfil the duties of manhood well. May not this be a figure of the purpose of the education of God's saints on earth here for duties to be performed in the perfected life?

What those duties may be, is not told us, and we can only surmise. But the boundless realms of thought, which even here stretch out before our view, suggest to us that the spirit may go on for ever advancing onward in deeper knowledge of the per-

fection of the Creator; and, with increasing knowledge, advance in more fervent adoration and love. It may be that there, too, God's saints, His holy ones, who have "perfected holiness in the fear of the Lord," may have some special ministry assigned them, akin to that highest spiritual work which is carried on even here in raising and purifying the spirits of their fellow-men; their sphere of ministry, possibly (as the history of St. Paul suggests), being assigned with a reference to the circumstances of their own spiritual life on earth.

And this life of the blessed, we are assured, will never end. The bliss of God's holy ones may change, but only to increase, as those conditions of our being become intensified, out of which it springs. Let it be granted (as was said before) that the word usually translated "eternal" does in some cases certainly express only a limited, though indefinite, duration. Let it be admitted that exceptions can be taken to the arguments employed to prove the natural and indefeasible immortality of the spirit, such as the famous one with which Bishop Butler opens his "Analogy"; that they do not prove—which seems to me to be the truth—that the spirit cannot cease to exist, but only that it does not, or need not, cease to exist *through the operation of the same causes* by which the bodily life, and the psychical life as

dependent on the body, is dissolved. We have a sure ground for our belief in the spirit's immortality quite independent of arguments such as these. We are assured that the spirit lives for ever by virtue of its union with the ever-living God. "Because I live, ye shall live also," is the express promise of our Lord. If we are taught that "God alone hath immortality" in Himself, and is incapable of death, we are shown also that He makes us capable of immortality and imparts it to us; as He, who is sinless, incapable of sin, makes us also capable of sinlessness, and sets us more and more free from sin. So much so, that the very expression employed to express the abiding life of Christ *in God* is applied also to the abiding life of men in Him. "In that He liveth," St. Paul writes, "He liveth *unto God*." And then he adds, "Likewise reckon ye yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive *unto God* through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Indeed, if we think of it, life is really a condition and state of *being*,—something which we *are*, not something which we *have*, as a superadded gift. It is the restoration of our true *higher being*, which constitutes the gift; and this *gift of being is life*. "This *is life eternal*," our Lord declared, "to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." To *be* like God now, is

* Rom. vi. 11.

to have those moral and spiritual qualities of God which abide for ever imparted to us. And Christ our Lord does make us "partakers of the Divine nature," if we are His indeed. So that "he that hath the Son hath life," hath entered in Him into that state of being, that union with the Divine Being, which is life for ever, and the happiness of which may go on increasing, but which can know no alloy, no end.*

Thus is our eternal life exhibited to us in the most practical way, not only as dependent upon our spiritual life here, but, much more, as inter-linked with it indissolubly, as one with it in reality, as the germ is identical in fact with the future more developed plant.

And this life, it is hardly necessary to add, is one which passes thus through tribulation into glory by union with, and after the example of, the life of its once suffering, now risen and triumphant Lord. It is "If we have been planted in the likeness of His death," that "we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." He was, above all men, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He is said in some mysterious way to have been "made perfect through sufferings." And then He rose as our assured, our triumphant Redeemer. As He "died for our sins," so He "rose again for our

* Cf. the two striking passages, St. John v. 25, 26, and x. 10.

justification," as St. Paul writes. We have a sure ground of trust that we are indeed pardoned and accepted by God in Him, if we are His indeed. For He was "declared to be the Son of God" "by the resurrection from the dead," all-powerful to make the "one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, atonement, and satisfaction" for all our sins: able now, in that He ever liveth, to make continual intercession for us at the right hand of God; omnipotent also to raise us too, one by one, to newness of life, through that same "glory" of the Father, that same manifestation of the Divine attributes, whereby He was Himself raised from the dead.

And therefore we may hope that, having, if it be so, come out of much tribulation, and been made perfect through sufferings, and having washed our robes in the blood of the Lamb, and been raised into newness of life in spiritual-mindedness, and faith, and holiness, and obedience to God in the delighting liberty of love, through Him, we too may stand as the holy ones, the elect of God, at the great day, forming part of the great and blessed company round the throne, bearing each of us our palm-branch (as it were), as having—for so some would regard the figure—triumphed over sin and suffering and death, in Christ; and, still more, as having so passed through things temporal, through life's pressing trials, sorrows, duties, cares,

in Christ, and through His Holy Spirit in our hearts, that we may be admitted to the good land of eternal rest, and joy, and peace, where "the tabernacle of God shall be with men," and "God shall be with them and be their God" fully and for ever; and where faith, which now struggles to pierce the clouds and darkness and behold God, shall pass into the very unclouded Vision of Him, and all "tribulation" shall be put away, for "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

LECTURE VII.

THE FUTURE STATE OF THE LOST.

"What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

1 PETER iv. 17.

IF there is something inexpressibly glorious in the thought of the resurrection of the blessed, there is something equally, or even more, awful in the contemplation of the resurrection of those who are spoken of in Holy Scripture as "the lost." And nothing but our great familiarity with the general idea of it, and the prevailing atmosphere of indifference to the higher things of the spiritual life in which we live so much, could prevent the subject from presenting itself to our minds with an appalling force. Glorious is the vision of those who have fought the good fight of faith, have striven to overcome evil, and promote God's glory through the higher life in others and in themselves, when now they have passed through the veil, and are in the very presence of God; their spiritual faculties enlarged, the hindrances removed which retarded on earth their upward flight. But how terrible by con-

trast is the view of those who have lived in darkness as their chosen portion in the midst of light, and have gone on in continued indifference or sin, when all that which now holds evil in check is withdrawn, and the conditions of evil are intensified; when the sinner at length wakes up to a true sense of his awful position; and, as those dread words of doom, "Depart from me, y cursed ones," are pronounced, he feels himself sentenced to be cast into the "outer darkness,"—words emphatically repeated—of those who are excluded from God's blessed presence, severed from the Source of light and love!

It may be well to recall the language in which Holy Scripture speaks of the resurrection and future state of those who have gone on during life in wilful sin. For the tendency of thought just now is to put out of sight, or soften down, the expressions employed to mark the punishment of the wicked,—partly, it may be, from want of a true view of the deep guilt of sin as it must appear to the all-holy One; partly from a desire to exhibit God's love in the strongest light, while His abhorrence of evil and His righteous judgment upon it, which is the correlative of His love of goodness and His just reward of it, are kept out of view.

We are to bear in mind, then, that Holy Scripture speaks of sinners as rising to "the resurrection of condemnation," * "the condemnation of the

* St. John v. 38.

devil,"* as "awaking to shame and everlasting contempt."† The day of the Lord is spoken of as "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men,"‡ "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."§ Of the "fearful and unbelieving"—those who are afraid to confess Christ before men and fight under His banner, or who are apostates from Him, rejecters of His blessings; of "the abominable"—guilty of heinous crimes; of "murderers and liars"—persecutors (perhaps) and corrupters of the truth, it is said that they "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."|| Passages these, which, with many others, express the terrible, though righteous, retribution inevitably involved in persistent sin. And our Lord Himself speaks in tones of emphatic warning of the "unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched." There *is*, therefore, clearly, a severe condemnation and punishment for sin—including under that name all indifference towards God, as well as more flagrant violations of His Law,¶—awaiting man surely in the unseen world.

What shall be the *nature* of the sufferings of the lost, is a point respecting which but little really is disclosed. For it must be borne in mind that

* 2 Tim. iii. 6.

† Dan. xii. 2 ; Rev. xvi. 15.

‡ 2 Peter iii. 9.

§ Rom. ii. 5.

|| Rev. xxi. 8.

¶ See St. Matt. xxi. 41.

the expressions employed to describe them are for the most part figurative, taken by a metaphor from earthly punishments, and more particularly from some specific forms of punishment which conveyed a terribly forcible idea to the Jewish mind. Thus the severest judgment to a Jew was the sentence which condemned the malefactor's body to be cast out into the Valley of Hinnom after death. This once pleasant valley lay at the south-east of Jerusalem. But in the evil days of the Jewish people it was polluted by idolatrous rites, and children were sacrificed to Moloch in it. This, and its having been "defiled" in consequence by Josiah, "that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Moloch"* there any more, caused it to be regarded with peculiar abhorrence by the Jews. And it was made a place into which was thrown the refuse from the city; to consume which fires were kept burning night and day. Whence it was viewed as intensifying the sentence of death by stoning—the sentence passed upon graver offences by the Superior Court among the Jews—if the body was further condemned to be cast out into the Valley of Hinnom. And accordingly our Lord, when declaring God's severest anger against those who should apply the term "*Μωρε*,"† "thou rebel," "thou cursed one," to any of his

* 2 Kings xxiii. 10.

† The word used by Moses and Aaron : Num. xx. 10.

brethren, adopts the figurative expression that he should "subject himself to the sentence of being cast out into the fire of the Valley of Hinnom" * after death.

Hence, when we find it said in the Book of the Revelation that "her smoke rose up for ever and ever," and that the devil who deceived men "was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," together with the fearful, etc., who "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire, which is the second death," † it must be borne in mind that this imagery has a reference, probably, to this severest sentence of punishment among the Jews. It is further, apparently, drawn from the earlier writings of the old prophets, and must be explained by a reference to them. Thus the prophet Isaiah, speaking of "the day of the Lord's vengeance," writes: "And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone. . . . It shall not be quenched night or day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever." ‡ And that this imagery of the prophet is taken from the material fires of the Valley of Tophet or Hinnom appears from what is expressly said in an earlier chapter. "For Tophet," he writes, "is ordained of old. . . . He hath made it deep and

* St. Matt. v. 22. † Rev. xix. 3, xx. 10, xxi. 8. ‡ xxxiv. 9, 10.

large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord doth kindle it." *

Hence it would appear that such expressions as "the lake of fire," "the smoke which riseth up for ever and ever," and the like, used to describe the torments of the lost, are to be taken rather figuratively than in a literal way.† They represent rather, under a figure which would have a special vividness and force to the Jews, at once the "fiery indignation" of an all-holy God against all unrighteousness, and also the fearful shame and misery in which those would be involved who persistently continued in wilful sin.

Indeed, the whole subject of the future punishment of the wicked, like other subjects with which the revelation given in God's Word is concerned, requires to be lifted up out of the level of a material system, in which it is necessarily (as it were) encased, and to have the inner reality spiritually discerned. To this, as to other similar matters, the pregnant words of the Saviour, "the flesh profiteth nothing," seem designed to apply. Material imagery is required as a vehicle to embody and set forth spiritual truth in the earlier stages of the life of the world, and of man's individual life. The city, with its gates of pearl, its foundation stones of priceless value and exquisite

* xxx. 33; with this compare Jer. vii. 31, xix. 6, 7.

† For the "lake of fire," compare Dan. vii. 11.

beauty; and then, on the other hand, the lake that burneth with fire, are figures almost necessarily employed to convey an idea of the blessed in their future happiness, and the lost in their abodes of gloom. And one great danger to which religious truth is exposed is this: that the material forms may be mistaken for the substantial reality underlying them. And then, a successful attack upon the outworks (as it were) of these material representations may grievously imperil, if not sweep away in the assault, the undefended citadel of truth within, which should have stood impregnable against every foe.

We may regard, therefore, the imagery under which the torments of the evil in the future world are set forth as a slight suggestion only, and adumbration, of that misery which is partly veiled from us and partly unfolded for our view. We may think how, even on earth, to all but the most hardened, physical punishment, physical suffering, and material loss, is but a slight element in the misery of a life of sin. As the very word "damnation," it has been observed,* once implied, "*the pœna damni*—the loss, *it may be for ever*, of the beatific vision—is, far more than physical torture, the essence of the sufferings of the lost." The most essential feature of the Divine message of judgment to come, involved in the words of Christ, is "the

* Prof. Birks.

conception of an irreparable, irreversible loss of a privilege, now attainable, and, when the door is shut, never after to be attained." And we can form at most only some faint conception of the intensity of that agony of the lost which shall thrill through all the elements of their being in the future world, when all the keenness and energy of their powers are multiplied a thousandfold; when all the alleviations which are now mercifully granted are withdrawn; when the various hindrances which now check evil in its exercise and its malignant influence are removed; and when all the outward conditions and surrounding circumstances of existence are framed, it may be, to be ministers of woe.

And is this to be for all an endless, everlasting woe? Far as thought can penetrate into eternity, can it discover no glimpse, no possibility, of an end? For those who have once been condemned, for their sin, to enter that dread realm, prepared for the devil and his angels, does "Hope never come, that comes to all"?

The answer commonly given, on what are considered to be sure Scriptural grounds, is a terribly absolute one. No. Scripture entirely precludes all possibility of change. It speaks of the misery of the lost as "eternal." It represents the smoke of the torment of the lost as going up "for ever and ever." It applies to a certain extent the same terms

to the happiness of the blessed and the misery of the lost. The certainty of never-ending bliss for God's holy ones, the redeemed in Christ, sanctified through His Spirit, is involved in the assurance of never-ending misery for those who have grieved the Spirit, rejected to the last God's loving offers of pardon and grace. And earnest souls, who cannot bring their reason to accept this as the truth, are constrained to ask: Is this indeed the teaching of Holy Scripture? Is this the message of the Gospel? And if so, can Christ have indeed declared the Father to us? Can Holy Scripture be the very unerring revelation of God to mankind?

And so, all thoughtful minds are led to search the Scriptures more carefully, and look beneath the surface, to see whether these things are so.

Now, as to the first point alleged, it is found that the word which we translate "everlasting," "eternal," does not necessarily convey the idea of absolutely limitless duration at all. It is many times applied in Scripture to things which must, by the nature of the case, exist only for a limited time. And the very fact that the expression "ages of ages"—ages, *i.e.*, which are themselves made up of ages as their component elements—is employed in Holy Scripture, is itself a proof that the word "age" cannot be equivalent to never-ending eternity; for to say "eternities of eternities" would be obviously

absurd. The term can only indicate that island group of finite eternities (so to speak), which is bounded by "the ocean of infinity" on every side. Indeed, the word "æonial," "age-long," for which we commonly substitute "eternal," or "everlasting," does not imply duration absolutely unlimited, but only with reference to the subject to which it is applied, and its continuance in the state to which the word "eternal" refers.* Whether this subject is, or is not, in itself such as to have absolutely no end, must be determined on independent grounds. The application of the word "æonial" to it does not determine anything with regard to it, so far, at all. And our own word "eternal," in its proper signification, has only the force above assigned to the original word. For "eternal" is only the Anglicised form of the Latin word *æviternus*, abbreviated into *æternus*; and "ævum" is identical with the Greek "æon." So that it is we only who have imported into our word eternal a meaning of absolutely limitless duration, which the word in itself does not convey.

Then, as to the second point brought forward—namely, that other expressions are used, such as that "the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and

* One of the most striking exemplifications of this use of "eternal" is a sentence of Gregory of Nyssa, quoted by Prof. Plumptre, when he expresses the hope that "after some eternal interval" (μετὰ αἰώνιον τι διάστημα) "the discords of earth may be harmonized in a divine concord."

ever"—it has been already shown that these expressions may be traced up to the language employed in earlier Scriptures, where they are clearly not intended to signify an absolutely interminable continuance of woe.

With respect to the remaining point, it is enough to observe that the infinite duration of the happiness of the blessed rests, as has been shown, on its own independent grounds. It does not stand or fall either with the force of the epithet which we translate "eternal," or with the duration of the misery of the lost. Eternal happiness and eternal misery have essential distinctions, corresponding to those in the good and the evil from which they respectively result.*

And all that a fair examination of the language of Holy Scripture allows us, I conceive, to say, is this: that while it assigns no limits at all to the punishment of the wicked in the future state, it yet does not in fact declare in any express terms, when the expressions used are fully weighed, that the duration of that punishment is infinite, that it is never, never to have an end.†

It is not, however, for a moment to be supposed

* It should be noticed that everlasting *life* alone is referred to in the two great earlier Creeds of the Church.

† The expression used by Justin Martyr, Apol. 52, is very remarkable: τὰ σώματα ἀνεγερῆι . . . , καὶ τῶν μὲν ἀξίων ἐνδύσει ἀφθαρσίαν, τῶν δὲ ἀδίκων ἐν σαϊθήσει αἰωνία μετὰ τῶν φαύλων δαιμόνων εἰς τὸ αἰώνιον πῦρ πέμψει.

that, because this is all which the express words of the Bible can fairly be interpreted to assert, therefore nothing at all is to be inferred from them as to the probable duration of the punishment of the lost. Holy Scripture speaks of it as lasting "for the ages of the ages,"—an expression which itself carries our thoughts into futurity as far as the mind can reach. And, if we try to pass beyond these limits, that the duration is absolutely limitless is *suggested* by this—that no ulterior limit is assigned. The "burden of proof," in logical phraseology, rests with those who would contend that the punishment of the evil must, at some time, however distant, have an end. And the only two causes through which, I conceive, such a termination can be brought about, so far as we know, is either by the extinction of being, the *annihilation* (as it is commonly expressed) of the evil—*i.e.*, the cessation of their existence through the withdrawal of the sustaining Power by which they were called into being at the first—or by the conversion of their spirit to God, their change from a state of evil to a state of good.

There is much which must be stated, in fairness, in favour of both these views. Thus, there are a large group of passages which speak of the "destruction" and "perdition" * of the ungodly (to use the words which our version gives). In his first Epistle to

* ὀλεθρος and ἀπώλεια.

Timothy, *e.g.*, St. Paul speaks of the lusts which cause men to sink into destruction and perdition.* And in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians,† he speaks of the punishment which men will suffer as “everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord.” And, if these passages stood alone, we should naturally, I suppose, interpret them quite literally, as conclusive in favour of what is called the doctrine of Conditional Immortality: the view, that is, that God, who gave man the possibility of an everlasting existence, and now assures it to him on the condition of his obedience in faith, withdraws the gift of immortality from those who wilfully fail to fulfil the conditions, and pronounces the sentence of extinction upon the spirit which He had called into life as the crown of His work on earth. If it be so, that we cannot conceive of God as calling men back to life in the body at the resurrection, only that their sin may be *manifested*, their judgment *declared*, and in order that they should be annihilated either at once, or after some torments endured (I am using the language of objectors here), it must be supposed that opportunity is given to the evil for repentance when raised from the dead; and that then, on their failing to turn, “the unrepenting remnant of God-rejecting men” will, by the operation of the law of their nature, be finally destroyed.

* vi. 9.

† i. 9.

But, be this as it may, to a large body of earnest thinkers, Holy Scripture does not appear on the whole to give warrant for such a literal interpretation of the words "destruction" and "perdition." And it may be that they are to be understood rather of the terrible failure, ruin, loss, which continuance in evil doing is inevitably to entail, as an aspect of the consequences of sin distinct in some measure from the misery and punishment which it is to bring. This meaning of loss and waste, it must be admitted, quite accords with the general use in Scripture of the word translated "perdition" in the passage of the Epistle to Timothy with us. And, moreover, the epithet "eternal," attached to the "destruction" which is to sever man from God's presence,* appears to some not to be the word which we should naturally expect to find expressing complete and utter annihilation at once; † especially when it is considered that there were other words at hand in the Greek language by which such an idea could have been directly conveyed.‡ It must be added, too, that this view of the state to which man brings himself at last by sin, as a ruin, a wreck of all the high purposes of man's

* Bengel understands the words differently—"Ἀπὸ, a; Divina animadversio poenam eis infliget."

† "Immortality and Everlasting Punishment."—Anon. p. 8.

‡ It should be noticed that *αἰδιος* is used twice in the New Testament: once in reference to God the Father (Rom. i. 10); and once in reference to the punishment of the evil angels (Jude 6).

being, his privileges, his hopes,—as a severance from higher objects, God and the things of heaven, the spiritual faculties for apprehending and delighting in which had been gradually lost,—as an extinction and annihilation of all man's higher and nobler being, which lives only in spiritual union with the living God,—all this seems in perfect harmony with the general spirit of the Word of God.

And then, as to the other view, there are many passages in Scripture which, taken by themselves, lend countenance to the belief which some have held from early times—which all would delight to hold, if they could but do so on Scriptural grounds—the view that “all men at the length shall be saved,” that in some way

“Good shall fall

At last, far off, at last to all;”

a view expressly condemned in an Article which was put forth in the reign of Edward VI., in 1552, but afterwards withdrawn. Certainly Holy Scripture does speak at times the language of Universalism, as it is termed. It says that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive;” that “in the Name of Jesus *every knee* shall bend,” to cite again but one or two passages out of a multitude to the same effect. It points to a time when the mediatorial kingdom of Christ shall be brought to an end “that God may be all in all;” and this, when “*all things*

shall have been subdued unto Him," * that the great end of Christ's kingdom, the glorification of the Father through the Son, may be complete.

But when we set against this the fact that Holy Scripture speaks of a sin "which hath never forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come;" that it warns us against a sin against the Holy Ghost, a continued resistance (as we understand) to the motions of the good Spirit who would draw man's spirit to God in Christ, resulting in a state in which it seems morally impossible for spiritual renewing to take place in the soul; † and that our Lord Himself declares that one who blasphemes against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, "but is in danger" (according to the reading of many manuscripts) "of eternal sin," ‡—we seem constrained to conclude that the word *all* must be regarded as expressing (according to the common use of language) all, *with such exceptions* as must be taken into account. While we may regard the word (as was said before) as embracing in its comprehensive range all those probably who have had little or no opportunity of knowing God on earth, we may not venture to extend it—which is a wholly different

* The expression *καταπαύειν* twice used, in verses 24, 26, should be observed. "If all things without exception," writes Dr. Chauncey, "shall be subjected to Christ, then death, the *second* death as well as the first, will be finally swallowed up in victory."

† See Heb. vi. 4.

‡ St. Mark iii. 29.

thing, though the two things are very often confused—as if it gave Scriptural warrant for a hope that all, even the most wilfully sinful, will at the last be brought back to God and saved.

And it is, accordingly, our wisdom and our reverence not to say more than Holy Scripture expressly asserts. We shall faithfully declare that it speaks clearly and unmistakably of the soul's appalling eternal loss through sin, in being cut off from God's presence and from all the joy of the blessed with Him; that it points to the terrible misery which the evil bring on themselves, through the ages of ages of the future life; but that it is silent as to the ultimate issue in that ocean of infinity which bounds on all sides the ages of time. We shall recognise that (as it has been said) if we affirm the *ending of punishment*, we fall short of Scripture; if we affirm its *endlessness*, we go beyond Scripture. To which we may add—changing somewhat the same writer's words—that to affirm *Universalism* or *Annihilationism* is to give to the expressions of Scripture, by a rigid literalism, an extent of scope which is out of harmony with the teaching of other parts, and a definite significance which many who have pondered on the subject most carefully feel unable to accept.

There are some considerations, apart from the direct teaching of Scripture, on which it is neces

sary to say a few words before bringing this subject to a close.

With regard to the probability, or, at least, the possibility, that most, if not all, of those who have wilfully rejected God in this life may yet turn to Him in the future ages, it has been urged, on the one hand, that this blessed result may be looked for, or hoped for, when many of those influences through which men are here beguiled or impelled into sin are withdrawn; and when motives to goodness are free to act with a more constraining power, and a clearer vision of God is vouchsafed. But against this must be set the counterbalancing points, that sin allowed has a marvellous power of darkening the understanding and hardening the heart; that we have no reason to trust that the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, which are freely offered us now, will be granted in any greater measure, if at all, to those who have rejected them here, in the world beyond the grave; and that a condition in which all man's environment, so far as we know, will be evil, and in which those checks are removed which here intercept the evil of others from us, and prevent its putting forth its whole energy within ourselves, is not one which we can regard as favourable for moral and spiritual improvement. "As no one," it has been truly said, "may dare to limit the mercy of God, so no one can tell to what awful depths

the wickedness of man may reach, or what irremediableness of punishment may cleave to it in the way of natural consequence. In its own character wickedness possesses no element of cure, nor even of exhaustion. It grows by what it feeds on, and shows sometimes a portentous power of self-development. It may make a hell upon earth; and that therefore it may make a hell in the future everlasting as itself, he must be a rash man who would deny. This, the essential tendency of evil, when left to itself,—to intensify, to accumulate, and perpetuate its own misery,—is what makes the weak point in all schemes of Universalism or Restorationism. Like so many optimist theories, the idea that all men shall become good and be saved at last is opposed by the course of experience here. The hard facts of the present life are all against it; and how are we to judge of the future but by the present? Supposing even that new influences of good were brought to bear upon the human will, who can estimate the hardening effect of obstinate persistence in evil, and the power of the human will to resist the Law and repel the Love of God? Out of the very excess of love there sometimes comes a greater bitterness of hatred; out of the very light of good a deeper darkness of evil. To assert, therefore, in the face of Scripture and experience, that 'all men will be saved,' is to make a very hardy assertion. About

all such optimism there is a tinge of unreality. It may please the benevolent; but it can hardly satisfy the really thoughtful mind.”*

Then, again, the question of the eternity of punishment has been narrowed sometimes by the supposition of the inherent immortality of the spirit, when once called into being by God. And thus it has been contended that, the spirit being immortal, the only question can be as to whether the sinful shall continue through eternity in a state of sin with its attendant punishment, or whether they may repent and obtain pardon and admission to the bliss of the penitent through the all-embracing mercy of God in Christ. And, in this way, the alternative of the final extinction of the wicked is put aside.

Now, the question of the inherent immortality of the spirit is one of far too wide a range to be discussed in any detail here. It must be enough now to notice that the arguments usually adduced—as they are given at the beginning of Bishop Butler’s great work of the “Analogy” in the most forcible way—seem really only to show that the spirit is not destructible *in the way, and through the agencies*, by which the bodily powers are destroyed. They do not prove anything as to the absolute indestructibility of the spirit. Neither do arguments drawn from the principle of the indestructibility of matter

* Principal Tulloch, in *Contemporary Review*.

(putting aside all question as to the truth of the principle here) be applied with any propriety to the spirit, which belongs, it may be—for we know little as to what spirit is—to a wholly different sphere. And reasons have been given for considering that the question of the continuance of the spirit in life for ever must be regarded on far deeper grounds.

One other point yet remains. There is in some minds an earnest, reverent jealousy for God's honour, and the maintenance of His omnipotence and love, for the all-embracing efficacy of Christ's atonement, and for the all-sufficient power of the Holy Spirit's grace, which constrains them to believe that God's holiness must communicate itself to every spirit, how lost, guilty, and degraded soever,* that all evil *must* some time be at an end, that its abiding existence *cannot* be reconciled with their idea of God.

On these high subjects let us not presume to be wise above that which is written for our instruction. Let our thoughts be humble, and our words few. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" Had we not *known* the existence of evil in the world *as a fact*, we should have argued *à priori* that it could not enter into a world called into being by a God of infinite power and love, or that, if it did enter, it must be at once pardoned and removed when God the Son and God the Holy Spirit entered into

* See Prof. Mayor, in *Contemporary Review*.

closest union with man, in order that sin might be atoned for and overcome. But we know that evil has existed, and exists still. And we do not presume to say what the issues of evil in the end may be. This only we can say: that a God of boundless power and love has permitted evil to exist, according to the counsels of His perfect will; and that the obstacle to its entire removal lies, not in any restraint of His power, any check to the outflow of His love: that it rests only with the beings whom He has called into existence, in that mystery of their free-will which we cannot fathom, to turn to Him in penitential trust and obedience and love; and at once His truth and justice, His power and mercy, meet together, to put away the sin utterly and welcome back the sinner to his home with God. When any are for ever lost, it can only be, we feel sure, because they have obstinately refused to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, whose thought (as He Himself tells us) is fixed on the one wanderer, where the ninety-and-nine are safe; and who goes forth to seek it, "till He finds it," in the unwearied energy of His compassionate love. And we think: What rapture to any to have been so won back (if it be so) even at last! But oh! what agony also, to have, even for a season, resisted and grieved, and been cut off from the presence and favour of so loving, so forbearing, so compassionate a God!

LECTURE VIII.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

ST. JOHN vi. 12.

IT remains now that we endeavour to gather up the previous threads which have been running through the various considerations as to man's state after death.

It will be borne in mind, as was said at the outset, that Holy Scripture fixes our view mainly on this present life, as the beginning, the germ, of that which is to be developed more fully in the after-world; that it refers more to the present and future high spiritual position and blessedness of those who do indeed live to God in Christ, by way of incentive and attraction, less to the misery and loss of those by whom God's gracious offers are wilfully refused, —its main object being (it would seem) rather to display God's *remedial* and *restorative* plan of mercy for the penitent, than His righteous *retribution* on those who persist in sin; and that it speaks mainly with regard to those who have had given to them opportunities of knowledge, and grounds

of belief, whom its message of promise and mercy accordingly could reach, and who are either accepted for their true and living faith or condemned for their unbelief; while it discloses less with respect to those who have not had these privileges which others enjoyed, however curiosity might inquire as to their future lot.

The general conclusions to which the reflections of the foregoing pages lead, necessarily modify to some extent what is supposed to be the popular view very commonly prevailing as to the present and the future life, which might be summed up in such words as these: "I believe that all obtain salvation alike who are led to look to Christ in faith by God's grace; and that all who fail truly to accept the offer of pardon made to them in Christ are alike eternally lost. For the rest—for the heathen and others who have not had the offer of salvation in Christ proclaimed to them—we cannot but regard them as, in themselves, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; we must consign them simply to the justice and mercy of God."

Now, Holy Scripture does, indeed, fix our view mainly on those who are spoken of by St. Paul as "the election of grace," called by God to special knowledge and nearness to Himself; an election which seems to have been *lineal*, confined to some line, in the earliest dispensation; then *national*,

restricted to the Jews as a race, in the second dispensation ; while it is *world-wide*, embracing "all men everywhere," in this third and favoured dispensation under which we live.

But, with regard to this election, there are two important points to be observed. One is, that it is an election not of exclusion, but of pre-eminence. It is not that some are cut off from God's favour and from hope; but that some are admitted to a covenant of special favour, special privileges, special clearness and fulness of hope. They are the "first-born," the "firstfruits," as Scripture speaks, in Christ *the* Firstborn, *the* Firstfruits, in a pre-eminent way. But it adds that, "if the firstfruits are holy, the lump also is holy." And the other is, that, even within the range of this election, some, in each dispensation, attain to greater heights of grace; while others gain only a lower place, and many fail altogether to make the blessings held out to them their own. Instances of such pre-eminently holy ones are Enoch and Noah in the old world; Abraham, Moses, and Elijah under the Jewish economy; the Apostles, with St. Paul and others who were "followers of him as he was of Christ," throughout Christian times.

In this way, we gain a more complex view than that usually taken of the spiritual conditions of men upon the earth. There are those who are indeed

striving after the "perfection" at which Holy Scripture bids us aim; spiritual athletes, using every means to win the crown and stand approved by the great Judge of all; "making their calling and election sure." Then, again, there are those who do not take to themselves the words, "If thou wouldest be perfect,"—who are content with a lower place,—but who do trust in Christ for acceptance, do yield to Him, in their measure, the homage of adoration and obedience in love. And then, in dark contrast with both these classes, are those who have rejected wilfully the offers of salvation made to them, in indifference or persistent sin. But, besides these, there are those many in all times who, "not having the Law," not having the clear declaration of God's will, vouchsafed to the Christian most fully, and in a degree to the Jew, have yet lived, and are living, in the Spirit, according to the law of conscience within them, as the echo of God's voice in the soul, and so have become "a law to themselves"; who have walked according to such light, weaker or stronger, purer or more corrupted, as they have possessed; some attaining to a high pre-eminence of virtue, in relation to the excellencies recognised, and the opportunities for the development of character offered, in the age in which their lot has been cast. While, again, there are many, only too many, to whom applies the terrible picture of heathen degradation

drawn by St. Paul, some even sinking as fearfully low in deep alienation from God through evil, as some, at the other extreme of human character, have attained to an exalted condition of holiness and conformity to God's will, in Christian grace.

We try to mark the condition of these various classes, as they pass, with more or less complete continuity of being, into the intermediate state. We catch a glimpse of the righteous there, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as they "wait, like Lazarus" (it has been said), "in the blessed repose of Paradise, for the perfection of their bliss; and probably receive *there*, from Christ Himself, lessons of love, and revelations of glory, which could not be imparted on earth, without endangering a frame unfitted for the reception of more than earthly splendours." "This much at least," the same writer adds, "may fairly be predicated from Scripture regarding a state which, though unseen by mortal eye, is yet intensely real, and into which the children of men are every moment entering." *

And if the spirit of one heathen (supposing he was such), was permitted to enter with the spirit of the Saviour into that blessed abode, may we not trust that the spirit of many and many a virtuous heathen has passed thither to join the spirits of God's more

* Dunn's "Destiny of the Human Race," p. 83.

privileged holy ones there? May not the declaration of this truth be part of the meaning of the words of hope to the Gentiles uttered through the prophet Isaiah respecting the coming Saviour, that He should "bring out the prisoners from the prison," and "say to the prisoners, Go forth"? *

It is in some regions (as we are forced to speak) of the intermediate state, separated by "a great gulph fixed" from the Paradise of the blessed ones, that they are assigned their habitation who have not truly lived to God during the probationary period of their life on earth. They have not become *fitted*, through the Spirit, for that higher realm. They *could not*, we conceive, by a law of their being, enter there. They are in a state of which we are told, with respect to the Rich Man in the parable, that it is one of pains, of "torments," of anguish, we conceive, in the various sides of their spiritualized condition, capable, it may be, of deeper feeling, more poignant sorrow, than is felt by men on earth. And this sorrow, we would hope, may have, for many, a more than simply retributive character. It may have, when combined with spiritual agencies for good at work there too, after the analogy of earth, a power for discipline, for improvement, leading those who go through its purifying fires well to a better mind. In the

* Isa. xlii. 7, xlix. 9.

case of the Rich Man we are shown an earnest desire for the good of others, which seems to point to germs of a better spirit, and which can hardly be reconciled with our idea of the feelings of the utterly lost.

What shall be the position of those who have lived in wilful rebellion to God to the last,—whether they are consigned to that realm designated as Tartarus, the “abyss,” where the evil angels are “reserved unto the judgment” of the great day,—Holy Scripture has not disclosed to us; and we dare not attempt to draw aside the veil which mercifully hides their condition from our view.

We have passed from the view of man as he is on earth to the consideration of his corresponding condition in the intermediate state. We pass on now to that second great crisis in the world’s history—the second coming of Christ to the world which has been made and redeemed in Him, when that judgment which is being passed in a measure now, and, we believe, in man’s disembodied state, will be more completely declared and carried out.

With regard to that judgment we are shown three main points. For one point: with regard to the *Judge*, we are told that it will be a Man by whom we shall be judged, even the Son of Man, Christ our Saviour; the truth which was such a great stumbling-block to Jew and Gentile alike. They

could believe in—a great portion did believe in and look forward to—a general resurrection to judgment. They could not accept the truth that God was to judge the world by one *Man*, and that Christ Jesus who had been put to death upon the Cross. Then, as a second point, we are shown, as to the *persons judged*, that it will be men in their bodies, whatever that investiture of the spirit may be which is to constitute an identity between the body which now is and that which is to be. For the spirit is to be reunited to the body, though now not a natural but a “spiritual” body, whatever may be the deep meaning underlying the term ;* the body with which we rise being in some way the same as that which was ours on earth, as there is an underlying identity between the seed sown and the plant which issues from the seed. And, for a third point, as to the *matter of the judgment*, it is declared to be the deeds done “in” (and through) “the body,” as the instrument, and, in some degree, the exciting cause ; the deeds so done being the out-flow and expression of the inner thoughts, feelings, motives, and spirit of the heart ; the whole picture of the life of each one being presented, it has been conceived, to our spiritualized faculties, through that marvellous self-registering power whereby each act, and word, and even thought, of our lives,

* See Isaac Taylor's “Physical Theory of another Life.”

leaves its imprint on the material world. But, however this may be, in some way the "books will be opened," and the course of our life displayed. And then it will be seen whether our "names are written in the book of life," whether we have been in living union with God through His Spirit, accepted by Him in Christ, the Redeemer of the world; the record of our lives being, as it were, written under, and corresponding with, the writing of command and promise in that Book which is at once the revelation of the Living God to man, and also of man's life, as it should be before God. And each one will have his place assigned in the judgment of unerring Wisdom, according to the heavenly character formed, the work for God done, as for a Heavenly Father by a loving child, under the conditions of his specific lot.

It is, as we may venture to think it is natural that it should be, as to the position assigned to those who have aimed at perfection, God's elect, His true saints, that most is revealed to us in the Word of God. Unto them an entrance into life "abundantly" is bestowed. They are shown to us as the Bride of Christ; or, under another aspect of the figure, as the virgins who wait ready for the Bridegroom, with their lamps burning; and they are admitted at once to the marriage feast with Him. They have "risen with Christ" by a first, a spiritual resur-

rection on earth. And now they take their high post of rank as priests and kings with the great High Priest, the spiritual King. We are told by our Lord Himself that they "do not come into judgment, but are passed out of death into life." They are admitted to "the joy of their Lord," in "the kingdom prepared" for them "before the foundation of the world." They are made rulers over "many cities," priests to God—permitted probably, *i.e.*, to take a glorious part in that high spiritual work of Christ, of which a glimpse is given us, to be carried on through the ages of ages of the future world.

But, if there is a "highest room" in the "many mansions" of Christ for the few, the chosen ones, the "golden" souls, there is also a place, a work, though not so high a place and work, for those, in all the infinite gradations of spiritual condition, who have not had such opportunities, or who have not so availed themselves of their advantages to the full, or who have indulged themselves in a fancied superiority over others through pride. For these there is a lower room, a less comprehensive work to be assigned.

Then, reaching on beyond these, we think of the vast multitude of those who, in heathen—and to some extent even in Christian—lands, have had little or no opportunity of knowing God truly; and with regard to whom we trust that they too may, through the ages of ages, be gradually brought near to God, through

the blood of Christ, trained to know and love Him. So that, "besides the Church of the firstborn, saved out of the trials of this world, and heirs of a special dignity, there may be countless and growing myriads of redeemed men in the generations of the world to come." * Such a view seems forced on us when we think how we are told that "as in Adam *all* die, so in Christ shall *all* be made alive," allowing (as we suppose) for those who remain wilfully impenitent to the last. For these neither Holy Scripture nor reason, I conceive,—though some, it must be admitted, find warrant in Holy Scripture, or in natural conviction, for the opposite view,—allows Hope itself to cherish hope. Holy Scripture speaks of sin which "has never forgiveness, neither in this age, nor that to come," because (as we imagine) it is an abiding "eternal" state of "sin." It declares, in language which seems almost entirely to preclude hope at least in this world, that "there is a sin unto death," for which we are not even allowed to pray, as if prayer itself would be unavailing for it; referring, apparently, to those "sins against light and knowledge, which would plunge us into endless abysses of probably increasing sin, and therefore of probably increasing and endless punishment," in Canon Kingsley's words. It speaks of some whom "it is impossible to renew unto repentance." And

* Prof. Birks. See Rev. xxi. 24.

reason corresponds to this teaching, showing us experimentally the hardening and darkening power of sin.

Whether—if indeed their determined impenitence and rebellion does put the one insurmountable barrier in the way of God's mercy, the efficacy of Christ's atonement, the mighty influence of the Holy Spirit's grace—whether, if so, their torment does last on for ever and ever, or whether they are removed from existence by an excision and extinction of being, at the fiat of the Omnipotent Will which called them into being at the first; and whether, in this last case, this final separation from the sphere of being of evil in man, and of the "death and hell" which seem interlinked with it, is signified by the expression the "second death,"*—these are problems of interpretation of Scripture, and of human destiny, which we may well be contented to leave unsolved.

Enough there is here for encouragement and incentive, for comfort, for warning, for all.

Enough for incentive, as stirring us out of a contented acquiescence in spiritual mediocrity, and of rest in the hope of deliverance from the wrath to come; as firing us with a nobler ambition to be among the elect, the true saints of God; and as lifting us up to a desire, a prayerful effort, after a

* Rev. xx. 6, 14, xxi. 8.

more living faith, a deeper love, a more earnest zeal, having in view that crown which God, the righteous Judge, will give to those who have so served Him "in that day."

Enough for comfort and hope respecting those whose untimely removal, as it appears to us, or whose lack of spiritual advantages in this world, presents an insoluble problem to our minds, if we regard man's opportunities for growth in knowledge, and for moral and spiritual improvement, as entirely and absolutely limited to this present life.

Enough for most solemn warning for the lukewarm, for the disdainful and indifferent (to whom a special warning is emphatically addressed, as if to remind us that neutrality and want of earnestness in the spiritual life is itself guilty treason against the majesty of God), for the self-confident,—for those, above all, who are allowing themselves to wilfully indulge in any form of known sin. For it tells them, in the stern tones of forewarning love, of a terrible loss which they must inevitably incur, of a state of possibly irreparable misery and ruin towards which they are being rapidly borne on. It cries to them to snatch themselves from the precipice which they are nearing, the whirlpool towards which they are being drawn, and turn at once to the Refuge mercifully provided for them—now, while

their day of salvation lasts, now, while it is called "to-day." "To-day," it says, may all the blessings of the children of God be yours, "if" only "ye will hear His voice," the voice of God's love calling you through the Holy Spirit, in Christ, to repentance, to faith, to obedience, in love. Thus, in the words of St. Paul,* "knowing the terrors of the Lord"—the terrible loss and misery involved, by a law of our being, here and hereafter, in an ungodly life—"we persuade men" to give themselves at once to God, through the Spirit, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Much, no doubt, very much, may be found to be far different from what we had anticipated, when we pass through Death's solemn portal into the mysterious unseen realm which lies beyond, and those wondrous things, on which we can form only faint surmises now, are revealed. Even on earth, how strangely unlike what our imagination had pictured them, are scenes which we visit discovered to be! And we smile at the thought of the fancies which we once indulged, when the reality is disclosed to our view.

But still, in general principle at least, such foreshadowings of the future as have been vouchsafed to us will, we think, be realised there. There the relations of God to man, and man to God,

* 2 Cor. v. 11.

which exist here, will, we conceive, according to the analogy of the dealings of the Unchangeable God, abide still. There the worship of God, with its inner sanctuaries, its outer courts, will conform (it may be) to the pattern shown upon the Mount. There, too, there will be for God's holy ones an unwearied ministry of perfect love, akin to that which they may have fulfilled on earth by His grace. For we are told that nations and individuals lost to God are to be found; that Sodom, *e.g.*, is to be brought to her former estate, and given to Israel as a daughter, "but not by thy covenant." And the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands."* There friends shall be re-united, never again to part; and earth's social relations, it may be, will be renewed, only transfigured by perfect love. There, in that holy city, which St. John beheld in his vision "coming down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband," that "new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," the whole creation, which now groans and travails in pain together with man, shall, it would seem to be declared, have its part in the "restitution of all things," in the all-embracing salvation obtained in Christ as its New, its Divine Head. There, above all, that state towards which God's

* Ezek. xvi. ; Isa. xix.

holy ones have been approaching more and more, through the Spirit, on earth, will be perfected, as they enter into the peace, the joy, of the glorious liberty of the children of God, yielding their free, delighting obedience to their personal, ever-present God and Saviour, in the absolute harmony of will with Will in love, till the great end of which just a glimpse is given us shall arrive, and Christ, in His mediatorial kingdom, "shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all." Beyond this, all is hidden from our view.

Fragments of truth only, many of these points which have been considered here. But even these fragments are far too precious to be lost. There are, indeed, great main truths which Christ would have His ministers set before the multitude of souls hungering and thirsting after righteousness, in the knowledge of God, that they may be filled in all their highest spiritual being with them. But, after these great truths respecting God, the Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, truths regarding man's needs and blessings—his true life with God in Christ through the Spirit here, his glorious destiny, if found faithful, in the world beyond—after these main truths have been declared, there are fragments of truth remaining over and above. And these, too, God, who has given them, would have us gather

up as a sacred store, that nothing be lost of those eternal verities of the faith, a glimpse of which He has disclosed to our spiritual view.

If, now, aught has been left unsaid, or said amiss, may it find pardon at the hand of the Great Author of those Holy Scriptures, whose teaching it has been my endeavour humbly and reverently to search into, but into the sanctity of whose reserve I have not presumed to intrude.

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